



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion.

As the world's population grows, the demand for food and other resources will increase. The world's population is expected to reach 6 billion by the year 2000, and to reach 8 billion by the year 2025. The world's population is expected to reach 10 billion by the year 2050.

The world's population is expected to reach 12 billion by the year 2075. The world's population is expected to reach 14 billion by the year 2100. The world's population is expected to reach 16 billion by the year 2150.

The world's population is expected to reach 18 billion by the year 2200. The world's population is expected to reach 20 billion by the year 2250. The world's population is expected to reach 22 billion by the year 2300.

The world's population is expected to reach 24 billion by the year 2350. The world's population is expected to reach 26 billion by the year 2400. The world's population is expected to reach 28 billion by the year 2450.

The world's population is expected to reach 30 billion by the year 2500. The world's population is expected to reach 32 billion by the year 2550. The world's population is expected to reach 34 billion by the year 2600.

The world's population is expected to reach 36 billion by the year 2650. The world's population is expected to reach 38 billion by the year 2700. The world's population is expected to reach 40 billion by the year 2750.

The world's population is expected to reach 42 billion by the year 2800. The world's population is expected to reach 44 billion by the year 2850. The world's population is expected to reach 46 billion by the year 2900.

The world's population is expected to reach 48 billion by the year 2950. The world's population is expected to reach 50 billion by the year 3000. The world's population is expected to reach 52 billion by the year 3050.

The world's population is expected to reach 54 billion by the year 3100. The world's population is expected to reach 56 billion by the year 3150. The world's population is expected to reach 58 billion by the year 3200.

100

THE ADVENTURES
OF
NEVIL BROOKE;

OR,
HOW INDIA WAS WON FOR ENGLAND.

BY
CHRISTOPHER JAMES RIETHMÜLLER,

AUTHOR OF "TEUTON, A POEM," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL & SONS, YORK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

1877.

(All rights reserved.)

251. d. 909.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.



BOOK V.—FORT ST. DAVID.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE RELEASE	1
II. NEWS FROM HOME	22
III. DEVI-COTAH	36
IV. FRESH ENTANGLEMENTS	50

BOOK VI.—ARCOT.

I. THE UNEXPECTED PROPOSAL	65
II. THE TURN OF THE TIDE	77
III. THE SEVEN WEEKS' SIEGE	92
IV. THE GRAND ASSAULT	113

BOOK VII.—TRICHINOPOLY.

I. A SERIES OF EXPLOITS	132
II. FATHER AND DAUGHTER	155
III. THE NIGHT OF SURPRISES	176
IV. THE FATE OF CHUNDA SAHIB	191

BOOK VIII.—FORT ST. GEORGE.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. LOVE PASSAGES	212
II. CHANCES OF WAR	235
III. PARTING OF FRIENDS	259
IV. CORRESPONDENCE	273

THE
ADVENTURES OF NEVIL BROOKE.

BOOK V.—FORT ST. DAVID.

CHAPTER I.

THE RELEASE.

As several days passed without any steps being taken for the liberation of the English prisoners, Nevil grew somewhat impatient at the delay, and at his request the Chevalier waited on the Governor to ask for the necessary papers. He found Monsieur Dupleix in much better spirits than he had expected.

“I am glad to see your Excellency so well satisfied with the peace,” he said. “I feared you might be disappointed at the interruption of some of the projects which you did me the honour to confide to me.”

"And who told you they were interrupted, my dear Chevalier? The war has answered its purpose in destroying the influence of the English with the natives of India. Henceforth they must be content to play a subordinate part. But the game of France is yet to come, and we shall be only the more free to contract our alliances, and carry out our schemes, from having got rid of the opposition of these sullen, pig-headed islanders. I have, however, much more interesting news than the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle."

"May I ask its purport?"

"In the first place, Chunda Sahib is again at liberty, and at the head of a military force. But what is of far more importance, Nizam-ul-Mulk is dead."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, the great Viceroy, the Soubahdar of the Deccan, is no more. In spite of all his intrigues and troubles, the old fox lived to over a hundred years of age, and managed to keep his power to the last. But he is gone, and nothing but anarchy will ensue; unless, indeed, some successor can be found strong enough to deal with his inheritance. Of course, his sons and grandsons will all be fighting for the spoil."

"Am I to understand, that you think they may be set aside?"

"Well, no—it may be expedient to retain one of the family. The difficulty is in the selection."

"Then you do not mean to leave the choice to the Great Mogul?" said Ste. Croix, with a significant smile.

"My dear Chevalier," answered Dupleix, looking him proudly in the face, "it is useless to talk of phantoms and shadows, when the substance is gone for ever. The real Mogul is he who can rule the empire that Baber and Akbar founded."

"Even though he were a Feringhee."

"Yes, even though he were a Frank. It is not necessary to sit on the throne at Delhi to make and unmake princes. If I have not greatly miscalculated, it is France that will name the next Viceroy of the Deccan, and the next Nabob of the Carnatic."

"They are extensive and populous countries, and France is a long way off."

"But I am here to represent her; and these Indians will soon learn by experience, that I am a serviceable friend and a dangerous enemy. I need not trouble myself about the English."

"Speaking of them, your Excellency is no doubt ready to release the prisoners, and I have to ask for a passport for the young man who has been stopping at my house."

"Oh! let them go by all means. The sooner they return to their shops and their traffic the better. While they are peddling and huckstering, they will have no leisure to think of state affairs. I may leave them out of my account."

"Your Excellency will pardon me, but I still believe you undervalue the English. They are a brave and energetic race."

"Oh! as brave as their own bull-dogs, and as stupid. I have nothing to fear from them."

"I suppose you intend to restore Madras?"

"I am bound to do so by the treaty, but a certain delay is granted, and there is no hurry for a few months. I shall hold it as a pledge, while I am maturing my other plans. And now, my dear Monsieur de Ste. Croix, I hope you will favour me with your company more frequently than of old. I am greatly indebted to you for your services during the siege, and I really need a friend and adviser like yourself."

"Your Excellency is pleased to flatter me. But my fortune has suffered by the war, and in seeking to repair it, my time will be much occupied with commercial pursuits."

"Leave the care of your fortune to me, my dear Chevalier. I do not think any of us will gain much by trade at present. The merchandise in which I am about to deal is something very different from silks, and muslins, and spices. It may be we shall have to bargain for royal crowns and imperial sceptres."

"We are subjects of the King of France, Monsieur le Gouverneur."

"Oh! I do not mean to wear the baubles ourselves, but to dispose of them at our pleasure, and so rule through the instrumentality of others. You may think it a wild dream, but I have it all here," he added, striking his forehead with his hand. "I see clearly how this splendid India may be subjugated and governed."

"The venture seems almost too vast and hazardous," said the Chevalier, "but time will show whether your Excellency has over-estimated your powers."

"Do not be afraid. You may trust to the star of France and of Dupleix. Meanwhile,

you will dine with us to-day, Monsieur le Chevalier?"

"If your Excellency will excuse me, I should wish to spend the last afternoon with my young English friend, for whom I have begged a passport."

"Then let it be to-morrow. My wife complains that she has not seen your little girl lately, and I hope you will bring her with you; she is a charming child, and will one day be a fit bride for a prince. I will direct my secretary to send you the passport you require."

As Ste. Croix was about to take his leave, Madame Dupleix entered the apartment. She was all smiles and graciousness to the Chevalier, whom it was evidently her present purpose to conciliate.

"What a stranger you are at our house!" she said. "It is quite refreshing to get a glimpse of you. And your dear little girl! I shall be so glad, when she is old enough, to have the privilege of introducing her into society. What a sensitive child she is! I hope her sensibility may not be too much for her health."

"Louise has enjoyed very fair health

hitherto, madam, and I trust her sensibility may be tempered by good sense and good principles."

"Oh! you are such a moral philosopher, Monsieur le Chevalier. But I respect the virtues which I do not pretend to imitate. How is your young *protégé*, the fair-haired son of Albion?"

"He is quite well, I thank you, having recovered from his illness, and escaped all other dangers."

"Now that is malicious in you, Chevalier! You remember some foolish threats of mine, as if you should ever take an angry woman at her word. You do not really suppose I would have harmed the boy?"

"I do full justice to your intentions, madam. My young friend leaves me tomorrow, to join his countrymen at Fort St. David."

"You must bring him to say farewell to us. And please take this *cornet* of *bonbons*, with my love, to your little Louise. I got them for her from the good nuns at our convent. There are no such confectioners anywhere."


With these and many more civilities, the

great lady at length allowed the Chevalier to take his departure. As he walked homeward, his lip was curled into a smile.

“What does that odious woman want now?” he said to himself. “I suppose she is acting by her husband’s orders, and that I am to be won over to aid in his plans; and as I am too old to make love to, she thinks to buy me with flattery, and my child with sugar-plums. I can afford to laugh at all this, but I must guard my Louise against her machinations. I would sooner see my child in her grave, than in the hands of such a woman as Jan Begum.”

When the Chevalier reached home, he found Nevil sitting by the side of Louise, and talking to her kindly and earnestly. She had dried her tears, and striven to conceal her emotions, but she was very grave and silent, and Nevil could not fail to perceive that their approaching separation weighed upon her spirits. He consoled her as an elder brother might have comforted a pet sister, and endeavoured to amuse her with anticipations of their meeting again at some future time.

“Who knows,” he said, “whether it will be in India, or France, or England? Your



father may come some day to see his old friend Monsieur de la Rochelle, and then I can show you all the places I have told you about in Warwickshire. My mother, too, will be so glad to welcome you both."

"Do you think your mother would like me, Monsieur Nevil?"

"I am sure of it, dear Sakoontala, if only for all the care you have taken of her son."

"Ah! now you are mocking me; for I could do nothing—nothing at all. I could only cry when you were ill, and sing to you a little when you were getting better, and shake up your pillow, and run to fetch what you wanted. But *you!* look what you have done for me! How many pretty things you have taught me, what pains you have taken to give me pleasure, how very happy we have been—and now, now it is all over, and I cannot be sure that I shall ever see you again!"

"We cannot be certain of anything in this world, dear Sakoontala; but we may hope to meet again, and there is nothing improbable in it. Now peace is made between our countries, it will be easier to visit each other, and your father has shown me so much kind-

ness, that I cannot think he will let our friendship come to an end."

"Oh, no! My papa never forgets his friends; but there is no one he loves better than that gentleman who is now in England, and yet he has not seen him since before I was born. So a long, long time may pass before he is able to come to see you—and you will be so much older—and I shall be grown up—and everything will be changed—and I shall never be your little Sakoontala any more!"

"Now listen to me, dear child. We have been friends and playfellows, and we have had a very happy time together. But we cannot spend all our lives in playing, you know, and I have a great deal of work to do, before I can go back to my mother. She is longing for me, just as your father would long for you, Sakoontala, and I should be a very bad son if I did not wish to return home to her. Yet I think and hope, that you and I will meet again some day; and of one thing you may be sure, that whether it be soon or late—yes, even if I should be an old man, and you a fine, tall lady, before it happens—you will always be to me the same

Sakoontala that made my captivity so sweet and pleasant. And if you fancy that I have done anything for you, and if you really wish to show your regard for me, you will promise me to attend to my wishes."

"I promise you with my whole heart!"

"Then you will not grieve at my going away. I do not mean that you should not be sorry at parting, as I am sure I shall be—but then I shall think of my duty to my mother, and what I have got to do for her—and you must think of your father, and how to make him cheerful and happy. And you must remember, too, that we are all of us bound to obey the will of the good God, who knows what is fit and right for us. If Father Clairvaux were here he would tell you that better than I can."

"Yes, you often say the same things that he does, only in different words. How I wish you were a Catholic, Monsieur Nevil!"

"Do not trouble yourself about that, Sakoontala. You shall pray for me in your fashion, and I will pray for you in mine, and our Lord will listen to both our prayers if they are offered sincerely. Are we not all His children?"

"Yes; but we ought to belong to the One True Church. However, though you are a Protestant, you will not mind wearing this medal for my sake. Father Clairvaux blessed it before he went on his mission."

It was one of those little silver medals of the Virgin, which are not uncommon amongst Romanists. She took it from her own neck, and kissed it, and laid it in Nevil's hand.

"I will wear it for your sake, as you say, dear Sakoontala, and also for the sake of the tender and holy thoughts which I know you have connected with it. You must let me give you my little gold seal in exchange."

"What! the one with the red stone, and the Cupid riding on the lion?"

"Yes; it is an antique—it belonged to my mother—but I have nothing else fit for you, and I am sure she would like you to have it. When you look at it you must think of what I have told you about making your father happy, and how you have promised me to be contented and cheerful."

"I will try," said the child, her eyes filling with tears; "but it will be very hard indeed!"

When the Chevalier joined them, they both

eagerly asked him if the Governor had granted the passport; and on his answering in the affirmative, Nevil grew brighter, and Louise sadder. But they were all three soon engaged in talk on the prospects of future meetings, and Ste. Croix pleased himself with the thought of one day visiting his friends in England.

"I was a great traveller in my youth, Nevil," he said, "and saw most of the capitals of Europe, but I was never in your country. The fact is, we were generally at war. But now, if ever I leave India, and you have returned home, and La Rochelle is still near you, I shall have a strong inducement to brave the inclemency of your moist climate."

"You will like it well enough, Chevalier, when you see how green it makes the grass and the trees; and you cannot tell how I long sometimes, in the midst of our sunshine, for the cool, fresh breeze that blows over an English common."

"And for the thick, white fog, no doubt, that comes rolling up from the sea! Well, Nevil, I respect your patriotism, and hope you may have the opportunity of showing us

the beauties of your beloved island. We shall like it very much, shall we not, Louise?"

"Oh! so much, so much!" cried the child, her eyes glittering with excitement.

"And if ever I go back to my paternal château in France," continued the Chevalier, "you will come and see us there, Nevil?"

"That I will, most certainly. But I think we shall meet in India before then."

"It is all in wiser hands than ours, my boy. Come, Louise, fetch your guitar, and give us that old song of the Breton Sailor."

She ran to fetch the instrument immediately, and sat down at her father's feet, and sang as follows:—

"Sail on, sail on, my trusty boat,
 Across the wide, wide sea!
 So long as thou canst keep afloat,
 I'll share my lot with thee.
 The wind blows east, the wind blows west,
 And sweeps the watery plain;
 But He, who shows the bird its nest,
 Will guide us o'er the main.
 Sail on! sail on!

"He held me fast with guardian hand
 Through years of gloom and shine,
 Since first I left my native strand
 For waves of seething brine;

And storms that beat on boyhood's brow,
And spent their wildest rage
On manhood's cheek, may ruffle now
The thin, white locks of age.
Sail on ! sail on !

"Then wherefore should my courage fail
Beneath yon darkening clouds,
Or shrink before the rising gale
That whistles through the shrouds ?
Who rules the tempest with a breath,
As in the ages past,
Will bear me up in life or death,
And bring me home at last !
Sail on ! sail on !"

"I like the spirit of that song," said the Chevalier. "It paints the simple faith of the mariner, but it is applicable to every human being. We are all tossing on the waves, Nevil, and scarcely know to what port we are bound. But there is One above that directs our course."

"I believe it firmly," replied the youth. "It is just what Monsieur de la Rochelle would have expressed——"

"But you did not expect to hear it from me," said the Chevalier, smiling. "Ah! there are some thoughts that come to us all at times—Catholic and Calvinist, priest and soldier, courtier and recluse. I have been

what is called a man of the world, Nevil, but I have had my serious moments, especially when I have parted with dear friends. It is then that the uncertainty of life presses upon us, and that we stand in need of support from a higher power."

"I am sure I shall need it, Chevalier, when I bid farewell to Pondicherry."

"Even though you have been a wretched prisoner, loaded with chains, and immured in a dungeon!"

"The chains were all of flowers, I think," said Nevil, "and the dungeon was a very pleasant one. I could pass my life in it, were it not for my mother and my country."

"And youth, and hope, and enterprise, and honourable ambition! No, my dear Nevil, it is not for you to spend your best days in the enjoyment of inglorious ease. You have yet to earn repose by labour and action."

"And to kill the giants," said Nevil, "like Jack in the old story, Sakoontala."

"Or to ride on a beautiful horse like Saint George," cried the child, who had been listening attentively, "and to conquer the fiery dragon!"

"And am I to marry the princess, the daughter of the Soldan of Egypt?"

"I don't know about the princess," said Louise demurely. "I must see what sort of a lady she is, before I can let you marry her. Besides, I am not quite sure that I shall let you marry at all."

"And why not, Sakoontala?"

"Because you are better as you are, and I do not want you to have a wife to take up all your time. It would be so tiresome!"

"But if you were to choose one for me, Sakoontala!"

"No, I should never find one to suit you exactly. When you have done your work, you had better come back and live with us; and you can bring your mother with you, and papa's friend too, and then we shall all be happy!"

In such talk, half playful, half serious, the afternoon and evening glided away, and when Nevil lay down to rest that night, it was with mingled feelings of joy and sorrow—joy at the prospect of regaining his liberty and rejoining his countrymen—sorrow at parting from the kind friend and the dear little companion who had soothed and cheered his captivity.

The next morning, he went to take leave

of the Governor, and was dismissed by that personage with a certain stately indifference.

"Now that we are at peace," said Dupleix, "I trust your countrymen will confine themselves to commercial operations, and that no further cause of quarrel may arise between us."

"I do not think your Excellency need fear any aggression on our side."

"I do not *fear* it. I only say, that I should prefer to remain on terms of good neighbourhood. I wish you a pleasant journey, sir, and a safe return to your friends."

"I have the honour to salute your Excellency."

As he retired from the apartment, Nevil encountered Madame Dupleix. There was a touch of pique in the tone of banter in which she addressed him.

"Ah, ah, Monsieur Broc! so you are going to leave us. I dare say there is some very pretty English young lady waiting for you in your colony. If she wants to know how you have behaved, send her to me for a character. I will tell her that you are the most admirable young man ever seen, since the days of the patriarch Joseph!"

"I am happy in your good opinion, madam."

"Oh! I have put you down among the saints, and would trust you with the charge of a nunnery. Adieu, my excellent young friend! May you long preserve that charming innocence which is so rare in our degenerate age!"

"At all events, madam, I hope I shall preserve my common sense, and not mistake a lady's pleasantries for anything more serious. Allow me to thank you for whatever kindness you have shown me, and to bid you a respectful farewell."

He smiled, bowed, and left her. She stood silent for a moment, and then burst into a light laugh.

"Upon my word," she said, "our young English savage has acquired a good tone—quite the tone of society. If he were not as cold as ice, and as proud as Lucifer, one might make something of him. But I shall not forgive him for his impertinence—no, I shall not forgive him—never!"

And now came the parting from real friends, and the last words which are at once so sweet and painful. The Chevalier had

many messages to send to La Rochelle, but Sakootala's heart was too full for her to say much. She held Nevil tightly by the hand, and looked up at him with those imploring eyes of childhood which it is almost impossible to resist. As he stooped down to kiss her, and gently disengaged himself from her grasp, he could hear the deep sob, and feel the tremor that agitated her slender frame. He was himself much moved, and could only console her with promises.

"You may rely on what I tell you," he said. "If your father does not bring you to visit us, I shall come back to see you, and I shall always think of you as my own dear little sister!"

They separated at last, and the Chevalier accompanied his young friend beyond the gates of the town. Horses had been provided by his care, and after an affectionate farewell, and renewed promises of meeting again, Nevil set out with several other Englishmen who had also regained their freedom. A ride of about twelve miles brought them to the river Panar, which formed the northern boundary of the territory of Fort St. David. Nevil had been somewhat depressed on the

road, being still occupied with the late scene ; but when he had crossed the river, and saw the English flag waving on the fortress, and heard the well-known sound of his native tongue from the soldiers who challenged him at the outposts, all other thoughts were merged in strong national feeling—in the consciousness of liberty restored, and in joyous anticipations of familiar intercourse with his countrymen.

CHAPTER II.

NEWS FROM HOME.

It was early in 1749 that Nevil arrived at Fort St. David. It was now four years since he left England, and about half that time had been spent at Pondicherry. He was therefore extremely anxious for tidings from home, having received no letters since the capture of Madras by the French.

As he approached the fortress, he was struck with the strength of its position. It was situated between two rivers, the Panar and the Tripapolore, which were here united by a canal; and on the remaining side was the sea, only separated from the fortifications by a plain of sand. The town of Cuddalore, which the fortress was intended to protect, lay at some distance to the south of it, and was chiefly inhabited by native merchants;

but the English resided for the most part within the walls of the citadel.

The usages of war were still in the ascendant, and our traveller was stopped at the gates to give an account of himself, before obtaining admission to the fortress. While parleying with the officer on duty, he was startled by a sudden shout of recognition, and a young man in military uniform sprang forward and seized his hand.

Nevil Brooke and Robert Clive knew each other at once, though both were altered since their last meeting. The boyish figure of Nevil had assumed more manly proportions, but a sedentary life, and the sickness through which he had passed, had left his countenance paler and more delicate than before ; while the strong features of Clive had grown harsher, and his complexion darker and more rugged, from exposure to the sun and active service in the field. There was no mistaking, however, the bright beam of genuine delight, which danced in the frank, blue eyes of the one, and darted from beneath the overhanging brows of the other, as the two friends exchanged greetings in the gateway, and entered the fortress linked arm-in-arm together.

"Never mind your horse, Nevil. My servant will attend to him. You must take up your quarters with me. I have so much to ask, and so much to tell. Thank God, you are once more under the English flag!"

"I can scarcely believe it, Robert. And it seems so strange to see you in a red coat, and with the cockade in your hat."

"My most appropriate dress, my dear boy; but I may have to lay it aside, now the war is over—though indeed I am not quite so sure of that. But what have those rascally French been doing with you? Starving you on *soupe maigre*, I should think. You look so pale and thin."

"I assure you I have never been better treated in my life. I resided with a kind friend, who was like a father to me. A gallant soldier, too, and one who has a high opinion of yourself. He was engaged in that sally where Paradis was killed, and commanded the troops in the retreat."

"What! a fine old gentleman on a white charger? I remember him well, and have the greatest respect for him. He rallied his men over and over again, though we peppered them pretty hotly, and drove them off

at last. That was a glorious morning's work, and I only wish we could have had many such."

"He speaks of your defence in the most flattering terms. But tell me, how is Edmund?"

"Oh! as jolly as ever. But you should see Margaret."

"Margaret! who is Margaret?"

"Margaret Maskelyne, to be sure; Edmund's sister. She has come out to join him, and is the sweetest girl in all India, and in the whole world beside."

"Which means, that the lion is in love, and about to have his claws pared. But tell me, Robert, have you any news of my mother?"

"Yes, I have a whole packet of letters for you. I would not trust them to the Indians, through whom I tried to communicate with you; and I am glad I did not, as none of my own letters and messages seem to have come to hand."

"Not one. At the distance of a few miles, I have been as completely isolated from my countryman, as if I had been at the other end of the earth. But let us make haste! You

may imagine my impatience to read the letters you speak of."

They were, of course, full of interest for the young exile. The first were written before any news of the capture of Madras had reached England, and contained many details of the events which followed the battle of Culloden, and the suppression of the Scotch rebellion. Then came expressions of anxiety at sinister reports from India, and the absence of direct tidings. The next was as follows :—

"Pray God—these lines may find you, my dear boy! All my worst fears seem about to be realized. I have just received a letter from your friend Mr. Clive, giving an account of the surrender of Madras, and the wicked treachery of the French, and how you have been carried off a prisoner to Pondicherry. I should have quite given way to despair, had it not been for Monsieur de la Rochelle, who assures me that his countrymen would certainly not deal harshly with prisoners, and that you are sure to be exchanged after a time. But the suspense is dreadful—not knowing where you are, or what may become of you, and having no means of getting at you in any way. I can

only implore the mercy of our Father in heaven to watch over you and bring you safe out of the hands of our enemies. He knows I acted for the best, and with no thought but for your interest, yet I sometimes reproach myself for having allowed you to go to India at all. Should you receive this letter, I hope you will answer it without a moment's delay. I send it under cover to Mr. Clive, entreating him to forward it by the very first opportunity. I am truly grateful to him for his kindness, and oh! how happy I should be to see you and him together in England. All old friends here unite with me in love, and prayers, and good wishes; but none can fully enter into the feelings of your anxious and devoted mother."

Then came other letters, some addressed to Nevil, and some to Clive in answer to subsequent communications of his, and all expressive of the same state of doubt and disquiet. But the following appeared at last in a very different tone.

"I sit down to write to you, my dear boy, though I can scarcely hold the pen—not from sorrow this time, but from great, unexpected joy. A letter from you is before

me, and brings me the latest news. Oh! how thankful I am that you are with friends, and that you have recovered from your illness! May Heaven bless those who have been kind to you, and who have sent me these tidings of your safety! Your letter came to hand in the strangest manner. I had begun to despair of hearing from you, the postman was quite tired of answering my questions, and I had written to your aunt in London and to everybody else I could think of, without getting any information, when last night a singular thing occurred. Molly had gone out on an errand, and as she was returning home in the dusk of the evening, she was accosted by a Scotch pedlar that used to attend fairs and markets in this neighbourhood, and was always suspected of dealing in smuggled goods. During the rebellion, when the Young Pretender was on his march to Derby, this man was somehow implicated in treasonable practices, and has since thought it prudent to keep out of the way. He now said, that he was commissioned to deliver a small parcel to me, and that he had ventured into some danger for that purpose; but as he did not wish to

be seen by any of the people about here, he begged Molly to take charge of it for me. With that, he slipped a sealed packet into her hand, and was gone before she could speak a word. She fancied it must be some French lace, and wondered who could have sent such a present to her mistress. But when we broke the seal (which bore the initials S. J.) there was your letter wrapped in several sheets of paper. I could not make the least guess as to how it had come, all intercourse with France being cut off; but Monsieur de la Rochelle judges from the seal and other circumstances, that it must have been conveyed through the agency of the Jesuits. If so, I shall never think ill of them any more, and I only wish I knew how to send my answer through the same channel. As it is, I must still trust to Mr. Clive to find some means of reaching you in your captivity. You may imagine how pleased Monsieur de la Rochelle was to hear what you say of the Chevalier de Ste. Croix. Your letter has taken a great load from my heart, dear Nevil, and although I must still long for your release, and wait anxiously for tidings of your return to your English

friends, I feel much less unhappy now that I know with whom you are. I am sure I should love the dear little girl, who has waited on you so prettily, and I want words to express my gratitude to the Chevalier. Though you make light of your illness, I fear it has been a very serious one. Pray be careful of your health, dear Nevil, and remember that in every precaution you take for yourself, however trivial, you are really caring for the life and happiness of your affectionate mother."

Other letters followed, in a hopeful, though still anxious strain, but less absorbed than before in one subject, and containing many particulars of domestic interest. Nevil read them all through with unflagging attention, and delighted to dwell on the images they recalled to his mind. He was once more in Arden, amongst his native oaks, and India was for a time effaced from his recollection. He sat down at once to reply to the maternal missives, and to pour out a long-repressed flood of tenderness in words of simple and natural feeling.

When he had accomplished this first duty, Nevil resumed his intercourse with his former

companions, who were now assembled at Fort St. David as the principal station on the coast. By none was he welcomed with greater joy than by Maskelyne, who hastened to introduce him to his sister. She was a bright, fresh, lively English girl, as modest as she was pretty, such as Johnson would have honoured with his deepest bow, and Reynolds would have liked to paint. Her influence over Clive was apparent to the most casual observer. In her company, the rugged brow grew smooth, and every shadow passed away from his countenance. And although she was courted by several gayer and wealthier suitors, with personal attractions more likely to win a lady's favour, and she had not as yet declared a preference for any, it was soon clear to Nevil that the rough young soldier held a high place in her regard. When therefore Clive talked despondingly of his prospects in love as in all else, Nevil could honestly give him good hopes and cheering counsel.

"I am sure she likes you, Robert, and that you have very fair chances of success. I did not think you could be so easily frightened."

"If I could win her by carrying a battery,

Nevil, I should not be frightened at all. But what can a girl see in such an ugly fellow as I am? And then I am as poor as Job, with even my trade as a soldier cut short by this peace. I suppose I shall have to go back to book-keeping."

"Is that certain, Robert?"

"No, it is not certain. France and England may make peace; but the French and English in India are rival powers, contending for very existence, and it will not be easy for them to remain quiet. There may be crowns to crack and laurels to gain yet—all which, however, will not make me a handsome fellow like you, Nevil, or put a lac of rupees into my pocket."

"Nonsense, man. Girls are not won by looks and money, half as much as by strength and courage; and if old stories are true, it is love that conquers all. If you have set your heart on this young lady, you are her brother's intimate friend, you have free access to her society, and I feel convinced that she is not indifferent to your good qualities."

"You would have more chance yourself, Nevil."

"Thank you. I have no inclination to fall in love with any one just at present. My time is not come. Do you know, Robert, I have never seen any woman to compare with my own mother?"

"Perhaps so—but one does not usually marry one's mother. Now tell me frankly, have you ever seen such a charming figure as Margaret's? And then such grace in her movements, such unaffected ease, such sweetness of temper, such——"

"She is all perfection, I have no doubt. But you used not to be so diffident of your own merits. If this goes on, we shall have you a model of humility and submission."

"I would not advise everybody to trust to that," said Clive, laughing, "though Margaret might rule me with her little finger. But seriously, Nevil, I have small hopes of marriage or any other good thing. I have often told you that I am one of a large family, and that we are not well off. My brothers and sisters are growing up, and my father and mother have enough to do to provide for their education, and to place them out in life. Instead of being able to

help them, I can scarcely keep myself, and what right has such an unlucky dog as I am to think of love or matrimony?"

"We are in the same boat as to luck, Robert. I have lost some two years of my time, and have to begin at the old work, with no better prospects than at first. I can see nothing before me but a life of unprofitable drudgery. Yet I mean to go on steadily, and hope to succeed in the long run."

"I believe," said Clive, laying his hand affectionately on Nevil's shoulder, "that you have the best sort of courage, after all. I think I have it in me to dare and attempt almost anything, and if the opportunity offered, to achieve something great. But you can possess your soul in patience, and wait calmly and quietly for the appointed hour."

"In other words, Robert, you have the more masculine, and I the more feminine character."

"If you mean effeminate, there is nothing of the kind about you. But I suppose we should not be such fast friends, if each of us had not some quality which the other wants.

So let it be a bargain between us. You shall teach me patience and forbearance; and I may yet show you how to fight your way to fortune."

CHAPTER III.

DEVI-COTAH.

NEVIL had resumed his labours at the desk, and the days went by at Fort St. David in the same monotonous routine as formerly at Madras. The French still delayed the restoration of the latter place, and it was well known that Dupleix was engaged in secret intrigues with Chunda Sahib for the settlement of the affairs of the Deccan. In the mean time, the English were involved in a quarrel of their own.

A dethroned prince, the Rajah of Tanjore, applied to them for assistance to recover his kingdom, and offered them in return the fort of Devi-Cotah, which commanded the mouth of the river Coleroon. It was probably with a view of regaining some of the influence they had lost in the late war, that they accepted this offer, and sent a military force

to support their new ally. This first expedition, under the command of Captain Cope, failed entirely, from ignorance of the country, want of provisions, bad weather, and other difficulties, and was compelled to return without having accomplished anything. It was then resolved to despatch a larger force under Major Lawrence, to retrieve, if possible, the honour of the English arms.

Nevil had just finished dressing one morning, and was about to proceed to the usual place of business, when Clive burst in upon him with sudden vehemence.

"You may wish me joy at last," he exclaimed; "we are ordered to march immediately. Maskelyne is going too. We have both got commissions as lieutenants. I only wish you were coming with us, my dear boy, instead of addling your brains with those eternal figures."

"But what are you going to do, and what is the meaning of it all?"

"Going to take Devi-Cotah, to be sure; and as for the why and because, that is the Company's affair, and not ours. A soldier has only to obey orders, and leave the responsibility to his chiefs."

"I should like to know that I was fighting in a just cause," said Nevil.

"I suppose there are two sides to every question," returned Clive. "It is enough for me that I am fighting for my country, and under the authority of my lawful superiors. But it was clear, that when Dupleix was forming his alliances, and taking part with one native prince or the other, we should have to do the same in our own defence. When the whole land is in a state of war, mere standers by get knocked on the head, or elbowed out of the way. I do not say that our present enterprise is the wisest we could have engaged in."

"What would you have done, Robert?"

"Well, if I had been consulted, I think I should have reserved our forces to oppose the French directly, and have met Monsieur Dupleix on his own ground. However, I must not waste any more time in talk. We are ordered to Devi-Cotah, and to Devi-Cotah we must go. Wish me success in this new adventure, Nevil!"

"I wish you success with all my heart, and hope you may return victorious to love and Miss Maskelyne."

"If a stray shot should find me, she will never know how much I loved her. It is better so, for I do not wish to leave regrets behind."

"Do you think your friends would not regret you?"

"I hope they would a little, my boy, and drink a bumper to my memory. But the fact is, I can only dwell on the pleasure and excitement of going into action. I do not trouble myself as to the coming out of it."

"You are a strange fellow, Clive; but I shall never have a truer friend."

"Well, we were friends from the first, you know. But I must not stop any longer. Let us shake hands and bid good-bye."

"Good-bye; and do not be too rash, Robert!"

"Oh! as for that, every bullet has its billet, they say. So hurrah for Devi-Cotah!"

He flung his hat into the air, and went off with the light step and high spirits of a schoolboy. Nevil could scarcely believe it was the same person that he had so often seen in the depths of gloom and despondency. The prospect of battle and danger seemed

to act like a tonic on the nerves of the young soldier.

That evening, Nevil met Miss Maskelyne at the house of the Governor, and a subject of common interest soon drew them into familiar converse. The subject was, of course, the expedition to Devi-Cotah.

"I hope it will not be a very perilous affair," she said. "I am naturally anxious—on account of my brother."

"I trust there is no cause for anxiety," answered Nevil. "Their first march would be a short one, as they were to embark on board the fleet, and proceed to the Coleroon by sea. Their landing would, I presume, be covered by the ships."

"Edmund told me they would have to go up the river in boats."

"It may be so ; but I have no doubt Major Lawrence will take all necessary precautions. What do you think of Edmund's choice of a military life ?"

"He looks very well in his uniform," she answered, with a smile, "and I am sure he will do his duty, and be a popular officer. But I do not think he has a genius for war, like your friend Mr. Clive. When my

brother was at home, he was rather too fond of his ease for anything that required much trouble, and we used to tell him the only profession he was fit for was that of a gentleman of fortune."

"He would play that part admirably," said Nevil, laughing; "he is so good-natured, and free, and bountiful. And then he has such an even temper, and such a constant flow of spirits. It is an odd thing, Miss Maskelyne, that my two most intimate friends here should be such different characters."

"I do not think it odd at all, Mr. Brooke. You seem to me quite different from either of them, and yet I can understand that they should both like you, and that you should like them. I dare say both Edmund's mirth and Mr. Clive's gravity want some little relief now and then, and I fancy that you are just the person to moderate their several moods."

"From coldness of disposition, Miss Maskelyne?"

"No—just the reverse. From having enough sympathy and imagination to enter into other people's feelings. I should have confidence in coming to you for the character of a friend."

"I would tell you the truth, at all events. Try me!"

"Oh! I have nothing to ask." Then, after a pause: "Well—yes! I should like to know if Mr. Clive is really as gloomy and reserved as people say. To me he has never shown it."

"He is reserved to strangers, not to his friends. And he has fits of gloom, but they do not last. I think he might be cured of them entirely."

"How so?"

"First, by a life of action, full of the great deeds for which he is fitted. Next, by the companionship of some one he loved, and who loved him sufficiently to follow him through light and darkness."

"That would be a dangerous undertaking!"

"Not so dangerous as you suppose. Clive is strong in his affections, as in everything else, and could conquer his own infirmities for the sake of another's peace. He would be very constant, tender, and true."

"I see clearly, that he has a warm friend in Mr. Brooke."

"And I hope in Miss Maskelyne?"

"Oh! of course I must take an interest in

one to whom my brother is so much attached. I wonder when we shall have the next news from England. Have you heard lately from your mother ? ”

And so the conversation changed, and Miss Maskelyne said no more about Clive ; but she looked gratefully at Nevil, and was very friendly with him, and a superficial observer might have set him down as the chosen object of her favour.

That evening was followed by days of suspense, till at length a light vessel appeared off Fort St. David, with news of the expedition. It brought a letter from Edmund Maskelyne to his sister, who sent it to Nevil for his perusal.

“ Here we are at last, my dear Meggy,” it said, “ in Devi-Cotah, and plenty of work we have had to get here. It is really very troublesome, this life of a soldier, and not always so amusing as you may fancy. The fighting would be well enough in cooler weather, but the heat is unbearable, and we have to put up with very rough entertainment. A fellow like Clive thinks nothing of it, but I confess to a liking for regular meals and a good night’s rest. However, there is

no help for it, and I manage to console myself with a laugh and a song. But I must tell you something of our wonderful exploits. When we reached the mouth of the Coleroon, we had to go up the river in boats as I told you would be the case, and we landed on the opposite shore to the great, ugly, frowning fortress, which was too strong to storm till we had made a breach in the walls. So we thundered away for three days with our 24-pounders, until our artillerymen succeeded in giving me the headache, and in making a practicable breach. But then came the question how the deuce we were to cross the river, with the enemy in force on the other bank, firing under cover of the thickets, and with a rapid stream in front of us. We should never have done it, had it not been for a ship's carpenter named John Moore. These sailors are up to anything, and this fellow set to work and built us a raft that would carry four hundred men; and then in a dark night he swam the river, and made fast the end of a rope to the root of a large tree. The rope was sunk in the water, and the enemy knew nothing of it; and you may imagine their astonishment when they saw

the raft moving towards them with our first detachment. Of course, Master Robert Clive was amongst the foremost, and somehow or other we all managed (except those who were killed) to scramble over, though we had a very pretty shower of bullets about our ears. But now came the time to storm the breach, which the Tanjorines had already partly covered with a fresh intrenchment, and which was likewise defended by a muddy rivulet that boded no good to our new uniforms. Clive, who is a favourite with the major, got permission to lead the attack. He was over the brook in no time, and would have carried all before him, only that the Sepoys hung back, and left him with some thirty Englishmen to stand a charge of Tanjorine horse in the space between the rivulet and the wall. Twenty-six of his men were cut to pieces, and he escaped as if by miracle from amongst the swords of the enemy, and had only three of our lads with him when he rejoined the Sepoys. But Major Lawrence now advanced to support him with all the Englishmen he could muster, and with a platoon of grenadiers at their head, and then you should have seen Master

Robert in all his glory. It was such helter-skelter work, that I scarcely know how it all happened; but Clive was here, there, and everywhere, and we had only to follow, to find ourselves through the breach and in the fortress without stopping to draw breath. The enemy fled in all directions, leaving behind them an officer of high rank desperately wounded. Our surgeon bound up his wounds, and we tried whatever we could to give him assistance; but he had the notion of these Indians, that he was defiled by our touch, and took the opportunity when we thought him asleep, to set fire to the thatch of the hut in which he was lying, and so perished before the flames could be extinguished. I was very sorry for the poor man, but it was all through his own obstinacy, and how can you drive sense into people who think it is a sin to eat beef? Altogether, it has been what is called a smart affair, and I certainly found it a very fatiguing one. I was never so thirsty in my life, and the first draught of water I got was worth all the wine in the Company's cellars. I suppose the major will have the chief credit of the action, but every one says that Clive has

distinguished himself greatly. As for your loving brother, he is quite satisfied not to be killed or wounded, and to be able to write you this letter with the prospect of a little rest; and he will not be sorry, dear Meggy, to have the honour of seeing your ladyship, and giving you all the details at leisure."

When Nevil waited on Miss Maskelyne to return the letter, he found her in excellent spirits. "I am so glad," she said, "that the worst is over, and that Edmund is safe, and that—that his friend has gained so much distinction. It must be very gratifying to my brother."

"Very," answered Nevil, gravely; "and to all Robert Clive's friends. If he had fallen, we should have lost the most promising officer in our little army."

"I do not like to think of that," said Margaret, turning pale. "Yes, Mr. Brooke," she added, all the honesty of her nature mantling in the blush which succeeded to the pallor, "if Mr. Clive had fallen, I should have been as much grieved as any of his friends."

"I hope I may tell him so, Miss Maskeleyne?"

“Oh, no! that is not necessary. Besides, he would not care for such posthumous tokens of regard.”

“No doubt he would prefer to have them while yet alive, and I trust he may soon have the opportunity of saying as much for himself.”

“If I write to Edmund, shall I send any message from you, Mr. Brooke?”

“My congratulations on their late success, and my best wishes for their speedy return. He might say to Clive——”

“Oh! if you have a message for any one else, I think you had better write yourself. Edmund will be delighted to have a letter from you, and friendly greetings come so much more pleasantly when not conveyed through a third person.”

Not long after this conversation, Nevil received a few lines from Clive.

“You will have heard of our capture of Devi-Cotah, so I will not trouble you with particulars. But I may now tell you that we are about to make peace with the Tanjorines. We have discovered what we ought to have found out before, that the ex-rajah has no partisans in the country, and that it would be

hopeless to attempt replacing him on the throne. And while we have been engaged in this foolish expedition, Monsieur Dupleix has been busy with very different work. There is great news from Amboor, and it is high time that we should disentangle ourselves from this Tanjorine affair. So we shall secure a pension for our unfortunate ally, who will remain under our protection, and we must be content with Devi-Cotah and the expenses of the war. As far as I am concerned, it is very annoying to be again stopped short in this manner, when I might have had the chance of gaining some little reputation. I should be still more vexed about it were it not for the thought of soon seeing Margaret Maskelyne. I only wish I could do something to deserve her notice; but what can I do, except in the fighting way, and how can I ever hope to be worthy of such a girl as she is?"

CHAPTER IV.

FRESH ENTANGLEMENTS.

THE news, to which Clive alluded in his letter to Nevil, was, indeed, of the highest importance. Dupleix had succeeded in effecting a great revolution, which gave to France the supremacy in the affairs of India. When Nizam-al-Mulk died, his eldest son was absent at Delhi, in the service of the Emperor; but his second son, Nazir Jung, was with the army, and at once got possession of his father's treasure, and was proclaimed his successor as Soubahdar of the Deccan. He was supported by Anwar-u-Deen, the old Nabob of Arcot, his authority was generally acknowledged, and he would probably have succeeded in establishing himself in the government, had it not been for the intrigues of Dupleix. But this was the opportunity which the wily

Frenchman had so long sought, and he now resolved to avail himself of it, to appoint a Soubahdar and a Nabob of his own.

There was a grandson of Nizam-al-Mulk, named Mirzapha Jung, who gave out that he had been nominated to the succession by his grandfather's will, and both he and Nazir Jung produced patents from the court of Delhi (probably forged) confirming them in the viceregal office. But Mirzapha Jung was not strong enough to contend with his uncle's forces, and was still lingering in the countries to the westward of Golconda, when he was joined by Chunda Sahib, whom Dupleix had ransomed from the Mahrattas. This new ally not only brought him the aid of his own skill and valour, but also a body of troops which his reputation for adventure had gathered round him, and the secret assurance of assistance from the Governor of Pondicherry.

The confederates soon agreed upon the basis of their alliance. Mirzapha Jung was to have the Deccan, Chunda Sahib the Carnatic, and Monsieur Dupleix, as the friend and patron of both, was to receive a large share of honour and advantage from these

transactions. The latter indeed cared little for such conditions, as he well knew that their fulfilment must depend entirely on his power to enforce them, and that he would be able to dictate his own terms to princes, whom he had set up and could pull down at pleasure.

The two adventurers began their operations by invading the Carnatic. In their march, their army was increased by the enlistment of all the wild and turbulent spirits in the countries they traversed, and before they passed the mountains it had swollen to a force of 40,000 men, and was augmented by a contingent from Pondicherry, under the command of Monsieur D'Auteuil, a French officer. The Nabob Anwar-u-Deen saw his danger, and prepared to defend himself vigorously, notwithstanding his extreme old age. He posted his troops in a strong position near Amboor, about fifty miles from his capital of Arcot, in a pass between a mountain and a lake, where he awaited the enemy behind his intrenchments. And here he would probably have succeeded in holding his ground against his natives foes ; but the French volunteered to storm the fortifications, and although they were twice repulsed, and D'Auteuil was him-

self wounded in the second attack, they returned a third time to the assault under a gallant officer named Bussy (to be well known hereafter), and finished by carrying the works. The old Nabob, mounted on his elephant and surrounded by his cavalry, was ready to give them battle on the other side; but when he heard that his eldest son had fallen, and saw Chunda Sahib advancing towards him, he gave way to his fury, and ordered his driver to push right against the elephant of his rival. He had nearly reached him, when a shot pierced his heart, and he fell dead upon the plain. His troops instantly took to flight, and were pursued with great slaughter. His eldest son had not really been killed, but was taken prisoner. His second son, Mahomed Ali, escaped to Trichinopoly.

This was the decisive battle of Amboor, the news of which was received by the English while they were yet engaged in their expedition to Devi-Cotah. They saw at once the great advantage which Dupleix had gained for himself and his country, but their own proceedings in Tanjore prevented their objecting with any grace to his interference in the

affairs of the native princes. They were, moreover, unwilling to renew their quarrel with the French, especially as they were anxious to obtain the restoration of Madras, in accordance with the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Nothing, therefore, seemed to stand in the way of the victorious confederates. Mirzapha Jung and Chunda Sahib repaired at once to Arcot, where the former assumed the state of Soubahdar of the Deccan, and appointed his friend Nabob of the Carnatic. Having levied tribute from all the neighbouring chiefs, and exercised other acts of sovereignty, they next proceeded to pay a visit to their astute ally at Pondicherry. Dupleix received them with all the magnificence of an Indian monarch, and spared no expense in the festivities he devised for their entertainment. In return, they treated him with the utmost deference, and bestowed on him the grant of eighty-one villages in the neighbourhood of the French colony.

It was while these events were passing, that the English made peace with the Tanjorines, and that Clive returned to Fort St. David. When he and Nevil were again.

seated together in the veranda of the house they inhabited, and the latter had answered all his questions as to how Margaret had looked and talked in his absence, they began to converse on the present state of affairs.

“What is to be the end of it all?” asked Nevil.

“Unless we take some extraordinary resolution, I can see but one end. We may be allowed to exist for a time on sufferance, in the position of obscure traders; but the French will be paramount throughout the Deccan, and if we cross them in anything we shall be driven out of India. And they can do it without violating the treaty, by making use of the natives as their tools. We are no more a match for them than geese are for foxes.”

“You take a flattering view of your countrymen, Robert!”

“I know their weakness, Nevil. They are brave, honest, generous, whatever you will; but they are true descendants of Ethelred the Unready. The French can always steal a march on them.”

“And what are you going to do?”

“Return to my book-keeping. There will

be no other choice. I suppose we shall have Madras, but I hear that Fort St. David is still to be our chief settlement on the coast. And here we shall remain, peddling and chaffering, till the French have completed their other conquests, and have leisure to come and swallow us up."

"But what would you do, if you had your way?"

"Try and checkmate Monsieur Dupleix. Look here, Nevil! the game is clear. Mahomed Ali, the son of poor old Anwar-ud-Deen, has escaped to Trichinopoly. Nazir Jung is of course advancing to dispute his nephew's title to the Deccan. I should tell Dupleix at once that we do not acknowledge his mushroom Viceroys and Nabobs, and that we have as much right as he has to form alliances and furnish contingents. Then I would arm every man, woman, and child in the colony ——"

"What! Margaret and all?"

"Yes, Margaret and all. She would make a capital Joan of Arc. But, jesting apart, I would bring all the force I could into the field, and then, without a moment's pause, declare for Nazir Jung and Mahomed Ali.

It should be Viceroy against Viceroy, Nabob against Nabob, England against France, and India for the prize of war. But, instead of that, we shall just do enough to annoy and irritate the French, and not sufficient to effect or decide anything. No, there is nothing for it, but for me to return to my book-keeping."

Events turned out much as Clive had predicted. After some delay, the English obtained the restoration of Madras, and then allowed Admiral Boscawen to depart for England with his fleet. They kept the presidency at Fort St. David as the stronger place, and sent 120 men to join Mahomed Ali at Trichinopoly; but, beyond this ridiculous demonstration, they made no attempt to interfere, and suffered Dupleix to proceed uninterruptedly with his schemes.

They were no doubt hampered by instructions from home. The English Government was naturally unwilling to endanger the newly concluded peace with France, and the East India Company, only anxious to carry on its trade in quiet, was easily induced to direct its agents to avoid all causes of quarrel, and to withdraw as much as possible from the dissensions of the native princes. It was an

intelligible policy, but not likely to be long maintained under the circumstances.

As Clive had foreseen, Nazir Jung collected a large army, and marched into the Carnatic to encounter his nephew. He was joined by Mahomed Ali, and many of the independent chiefs, and at first his enterprise was attended with complete success. Dupleix sent a body of troops to support Mirzapha Jung, but the French officers mutinied for pay at the moment of action, and deserted their posts in the face of the enemy. Sedition spread through Mirzapha Jung's forces, he was compelled to capitulate to his uncle, and Chunda Sahib only saved himself by flight. It seemed as if the whole edifice, which the French had reared with so much pains, had fallen at the first breath of opposition.

But Dupleix was equal to every emergency. He arrested and punished the mutineers, supplied their places with other officers, and at once began to treat with Nazir Jung, and to intrigue with the discontented spirits that were already to be found in that prince's army. In the mean time, he resolved to carry on the war with vigour, and to retrieve the reputation of the French arms. By his

orders, D'Auteuil attacked Nazir Jung's camp at dead of night, penetrated a mile into it, and inflicted considerable damage on the enemy; and, soon after, the French captured Masulipatam and the Pagoda of Trivadi, and under the valiant Bussy stormed and took the strong hill-fort of Gingee. But these exploits were only the prelude to what was to follow. While Dupleix was amusing Nazir Jung with offers to treat, he had entered into a secret confederacy with three of the chieftains that followed the standard of the Soubahdar. At a concerted signal, the French fell upon the camp, and were joined by the conspirators. Nazir Jung, hearing of the advance of the assailants, and that a portion of his own troops remained inactive, rode forward on his elephant to reproach the latter with their cowardice or treachery, when he was shot through the heart by one of the traitors. His head was struck off and carried to Mirzapha Jung, who was at once released from his confinement, and restored to his rank of Soubahdar. Mahomed Ali fled with only two or three attendants, and once more escaped to Trichinopoly.

When this news reached Pondicherry, Chunda Sahib was the first to acquaint Monsieur Dupleix with it, and the two friends embraced in a transport of joy and triumph. A few days later, Mirzapha Jung himself arrived with a splendid train, and entered the town in the same palanquin with Dupleix, who had come out to meet him. No place was now too high for the victorious Frenchman. Clothed in the magnificent dress of a Mahomedan officer of the first class, bestowed on him by the grateful Viceroy, he took precedence of all the assembled princes and nobles, and received from his guest such honours and privileges as had never before been granted to any European. He was appointed Governor of all the Mogul's dominions between the river Kistnah and Cape Comorin, with about thirty millions of people under his rule. The revenues of that vast territory were to be paid into his treasury, to be afterwards accounted for to the Soubahdar, and no money was to be current in the Carnatic, except it was coined in the mint at Pondicherry. Even Chunda Sahib, though acknowledged as Nabob of Arcot, was to act as deputy to the Frenchman, and no petition

was to be presented to the Viceroy, unless authorized by the signature of Dupleix.

In return for these extraordinary concessions, Dupleix undertook to defend the Viceroy against all his enemies, and sent Bussy with a body of French troops to accompany him to Hyderabad. Mirzapha Jung was soon after assassinated by the same band of conspirators who had murdered his uncle, and who considered that they had not been sufficiently rewarded for their services; but Bussy instantly proclaimed Salabut Jung (one of the imprisoned sons of Nizam-al-Mulk) Soubahdar of the Deccan, and obtained from that prince the confirmation of all the grants made to the French by his predecessor. Thus Dupleix triumphed in spite of every accident, and his name was held in such awe, that no one dared to dispute his authority. He reigned without a rival in the south of India, and his power was only equalled by the ostentation with which he displayed it. On the spot where Nazir Jung had fallen, he resolved to erect a column with inscriptions in four languages, proclaiming the glory of the French arms, and the success of the French policy; and around this monument

was to rise a memorial city, bearing the expressive title of Dupleix Fatihabad—the City of the Victory of Dupleix.

The year 1750 had passed away in these transactions, and during their progress the English had offered no effectual opposition to the designs of the French. They had indeed, as Clive predicted, just done enough to provoke their enmity, and not enough to check them in their career. Major Lawrence with a small force had joined Nazir Jung on his first entrance into the Carnatic, and the English had taken some part in the fighting at Trivadi; but their efforts were altogether weak, desultory, and without result, and they seem at length to have given up the contest in despair. Major Lawrence, their most experienced officer, was allowed to return to England on his private affairs, and the inhabitants of Fort St. David and Madras awaited in a kind of stolid apathy the future course of events.

Clive had resumed his labours at the desk in a sullen mood, only cheered by the society of his friends, and occasional meetings with Miss Maskelyne. He would often sit absorbed in thought, brooding over his

gloomy prospects, and even in the company of Margaret he would show himself silent and absent. But she had the art to combat his despondency with smiles, and to charm away the evil spirit by the fascination of her grace and beauty.

During this time, Nevil had not forgotten his friends at Pondicherry, and had carried on a correspondence with the Chevalier de Ste. Croix. He had even proposed to pay them a visit, but the Chevalier advised him to wait until the intercourse between the two nations was established on a more satisfactory footing, and soon afterwards wrote to him as follows from the French camp:—

“I am at last engaged in active service, my dear Nevil. After the mutiny of which you have no doubt heard, and which I confess makes me blush for my countrymen, we were left almost without officers, and I could not resist the solicitations of Monsieur Dupleix to join the army. I refused a command, but I felt bound in honour to give what assistance I could to D’Auteuil and Bussy. So here I am once more in my old profession, and although we are not actually at war with you, and I can still write without incurring

the suspicion of corresponding with the enemy, it is impossible to say how long we shall be able to maintain this anomalous kind of peace, in which we are taking opposite sides in the native quarrels. If therefore you should cease to hear from me, you must not ascribe it to any diminution of friendship, but to the necessities of my position. I was much interested in all the news you sent me of our friends in England, and the letter you forwarded from La Rochelle was a real treasure. I enclose one for him, which I commend to your kind care. I have left Louise at school with the good nuns at Pondicherry. She will be quite safe there, and able to complete her education in various feminine accomplishments. I have not heard lately from Father Clairvaux, but I am told that he is making wonderful progress in his missionary labours. I often think of the pleasant hours we spent together, my dear Nevil, and whatever may happen in the great world of arms and politics, receive the assurance of my sincere affection."

BOOK VI.—ARCOT.



CHAPTER I.

THE UNEXPECTED PROPOSAL.

A NEW Governor had been appointed to the command of the English settlements on the coast of Coromandel. This was Mr. Saunders, a man of sense and firmness, who saw the danger of the situation, but found it almost impossible to devise a remedy. The progress of the French was so rapid, their success so complete, that it seemed hopeless to offer any resistance to their designs. Chunda Sahib, their agent and ally, was already in possession of nearly the whole of the Carnatic, and Mahomed Ali was confined to his fortress at Trichinopoly.

But when a large force advanced to the attack of this last stronghold of the only

friend the English had left in the country, and at the same time Monsieur Dupleix proceeded to appropriate his new acquisitions of territory, by placing white flags in every field, almost up to the walls of Fort St. David, Mr. Saunders felt convinced that a struggle must soon come, not for supremacy but for existence. He resolved, therefore, to make an effort to save Trichinopoly.

An expedition, under Captain Gingen, set out from Fort St. David on this service, and for several months the English were engaged in various operations, from which they derived little honour or advantage. They failed in their attempts to keep the field against Chunda Sahib and his French allies, and were compelled to be satisfied with rendering what assistance they could to Mahomed Ali in the defence of his fortress, which was now invested by vastly superior numbers.

Maskelyne had accompanied the expedition, and was made prisoner in a skirmish. Being taken before Chunda Sahib, he was soon after released on parole, and amused his friends with lively descriptions of the dangers through which he had passed.

“We were encamped in a village,” he said,

“when some of those black fellows came by, flourishing their sabres in our faces. As we could not stand their impudence, seven of us mounted our horses, and rode out with some Sepoys to attack them. Away they galloped, and we galloped after them, and a very pretty run it was; only, we had not reckoned that they were leading us into an ambuscade, till we found ourselves caught in a trap like fools as we were. There was nothing for it but to fight our way back. It was all cut and slash, and the devil take the hindmost; and if the devil did not take me, five or six black fellows did. I fully expected to be carbonadoed for Chunda Sahib’s supper, but instead of that he treated me very much like a gentleman, and took my parole like any Christian. He is a fine-looking old man, and wears a turban that you would like for a shawl, Margaret, and a diamond-hilted dagger that I wish I could sell to the Jews.”

“Well, I am glad you are safe here, at all events,” said his sister.

“Not more than I am, I can assure you, however the fire-eaters may talk. Military glory is all very well, but a whole skin is not to be despised. Now that I am bound over

to keep the peace, I can afford to be philosophical on the subject."

Clive, who had lately suffered in health as well as spirits, retained his civil functions, and was appointed commissary for the supply of the troops with provisions. In that capacity he made one or two journeys between the colony and the camp, and was more than once exposed to considerable risk from the enemy. At length, when it became necessary to send fresh reinforcements to the English at Trichinopoly, there was such a scarcity of officers that the Governor was obliged to have recourse to Clive. He received a captain's commission, took the command of the detachment, and after a circuitous march through Tanjore, and a sharp skirmish on the road, succeeded in reaching Trichinopoly, throwing his succours into the place, and returning to Fort St. David in safety. Nevil was one day seated in his room, writing a letter to his mother, when Clive suddenly entered, all begrimed with the heat and dust of travel.

"Here I am once more, Nevil; and that little business is done."

"All hail to the victor!" cried the other,

flinging away his pen. "Come and sit down, and tell us all about it."

"Don't talk of victory when we are in a worse strait than ever. But I have not a moment to lose. I must wash off these stains, and go and report myself to the Governor. He must know the whole truth."

"But you say you have succeeded?"

"Yes, I have done what I undertook; but things are as bad as they well can be. Trichinopoly cannot hold out much longer. If it is taken there is an end of Mahomed Ali, and our turn will come next."

"I do not quite fathom you, Robert. There is that strange light in your eyes which always means mischief. You are not so desponding as you pretend."

"Well, I have something in my head, Nevil. You shall hear all after I have seen the Governor. Have some tiffin ready when I come back, and we will discuss the matter in quiet."

Mr. Saunders was in his library at Government House, poring over a map of India when Clive was ushered into his presence. The young man was a favourite with his chief, who listened with much interest to the

narrative of his late adventures, and then proceeded to ask many questions as to the actual state of affairs.

"Then you think Trichinopoly is lost, Captain Clive?"

"I think it is in the utmost danger. The French greatly outnumber our contingent; and Chunda Sahib's forces are ten times those of his opponent. Besides, Mahomed Ali is daily exhausting his resources; all his supplies are cut off, his troops are growing more and more discontented, and we are unable to render him any effectual assistance. Still, I do not say it would be impossible to save both him and Trichinopoly."

"What do you mean? Speak frankly!"

"Your Excellency must excuse my presumption; but I think I see a way out of this difficulty. Be pleased to look at the map. We are much nearer to Arcot than Chunda Sahib is. While he is amusing himself at Trichinopoly, what is to prevent our making a dash at his capital?"

"Are you serious? Would you venture to attack Arcot?"

"Yes. I believe the plan is quite feasible. I know that Chunda Sahib has collected all

his strength for this campaign, and that Arcot must be weakly garrisoned. Once there, we should cause an instant diversion, and he would have to withdraw a large portion of his troops from Trichinopoly."

"It is a bold design. But where is our force to execute it, and who is to undertake such an enterprise?"

"I have not had much experience," answered Clive, his eyes kindling as he spoke; "but if your Excellency will trust me, I am ready to undertake it."

The Governor looked at him for a few moments with a kind of questioning wonder; but there was no sign of doubt or hesitation on the face of the young soldier. Then Mr. Saunders rang the small hand-bell on his table, and summoned the native servant in attendance.

"Send to Mr. Pigot directly, and beg him to come to me on pressing business. In the mean time, captain, let us go over it all on the map."

Mr. Pigot was the ablest and bravest of the Council at Fort St. David. He knew Clive well, for he had accompanied him in one of his expeditions to Trichinopoly, when

the two gentlemen and their escort had been attacked on the road, and been forced to ride hard for their lives. He had great confidence in his young friend, and as soon as he understood the plan he entered warmly into it. When Clive had secured the influence of Saunders and Pigot he felt sure that his scheme would be adopted.

“But where are we to get sufficient force?” said the Governor. “And where are the officers?”

“We must take every man we have, and officer them as best we can,” answered Clive. “All I ask is secrecy and despatch.”

A long conference followed, and then the plan was cautiously communicated to the rest of the Council, and orders were quietly issued for the necessary preparations. All believed that it was a desperate venture, but they knew that the situation of affairs was desperate; and the calm courage of Clive had inspired them with a gleam of hope. They had waited, temporized, endeavoured to escape responsibility; but in this decisive hour the little band of merchants showed themselves not unworthy of the English name. They resolved to accept the risk, and to confide in

the bold young champion who had promised to retrieve their fortunes.

When Clive returned to his quarters, he explained to Nevil the full particulars of the scheme. His friend listened to him with astonishment and admiration, and was fired with a contagious enthusiasm.

"I see it all, Robert," he cried, starting up, "and I cannot remain passive when everything dear to us is at stake. You say that you are in want of officers. Let me go with you in any capacity!"

"You!" said Clive, hesitating for the first time. "I did not count upon that, Nevil. It will be very sharp work."

"And have you so poor an opinion of me, Robert, as to think that I should prefer to sit here in safety, while you are running the greatest dangers for the common good? I wonder you could ever choose such a friend!"

"But your mother, Nevil?"

"My mother would be ashamed of her son, if he hung back at such a time."

"Well, you shall go with me, and we will take our chance together. But you will not have long to get ready."

"I am ready now," said Nevil.

“Oh! you will be able to finish your letters, and to pack your valise. I only mean, that we must be quick in all our movements. I tell you what you shall do, Nevil. You shall go on to Madras by sea, if the wind is favourable, and carry a message for me to our people there. I must have whatever men they can spare from both places, and no word must transpire of the object of our expedition.”

“Then it is settled, that I am one of your officers?”

“Yes, it is settled, since you will have it so. I will get your commission from the Governor to-morrow morning.”

It was about the middle of August, 1751, that Nevil took leave of his friends at Fort St. David, and set out with private instructions from Clive and the Governor. A light bark soon bore him to Fort St. George, where he executed his orders with diligence and sagacity, and then waited for Clive to join him. The latter had laboured hard to collect a military force, but when all was done, and the garrisons of the two fortresses had been reduced to a mere handful, the troops assembled seemed wholly inadequate

for the work intended. It was with two hundred Europeans, three hundred Sepoys, and eight British officers, six of whom had never been in action, while four of them were (like Nevil) young men in the mercantile service of the Company, that Clive proposed to invade the territory of a great potentate, and attack the capital of his dominions.

When this little force, with only three field-pieces for all their artillery, began their march from Madras, the people crowded to see them depart, and those who were in the secret of their destination watched them with intense interest and anxiety. But Clive was in high and buoyant spirits, every cloud had passed away from his countenance, and he talked with the cheerful confidence that is almost an earnest of success. And his soldiers appeared to share in his elation; for he had that wonderful charm of the true leader, which commands the trust of his followers, and which gave their chief power to the Cæsars and Napoleons of history. At the age of twenty-five, this young captain had already learned how to guide and to govern men.

“Hurrah, Nevil!” he said, as they rode

over the plain together; "I have done with book-keeping at last, and all the entries about chintzes and muslins. But I have kept an account open against Monsieur Dupleix, and now I will try if I cannot make him pay the balance!"

CHAPTER II.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

It was with very different feelings that Nevil entered on this expedition, from those with which he had last left Madras, when a prisoner on his way to Pondicherry. The years that had passed between had given him more knowledge and experience, but had in no-wise quenched the gallant enthusiasm of youth; and now, instead of a vanquished and helpless captive, he was engaged, of his own free will, in a noble service, beset with dangers indeed, but promising adventure and distinction. He conversed gaily with the other young officers, and had pleasant looks and words to cheer the spirits of the men.

While at Pondicherry, he had learned several of the native dialects, and so was able to speak to the Sepoys in their own language. Clive employed him as interpreter

between himself and his soldiers, and Nevil was struck by the pains taken by the chief to understand and conciliate the troops he was leading to battle. In him, stern and haughty as he could be on occasion, there were none of those foolish airs of superiority which gall, and fret, and humiliate dependants. On the contrary, he studied their feelings, respected their prejudices, and strove to enter into their views; and in all this he was greatly aided by Nevil, whose lively imagination gave him that key to the thoughts and sentiments of others, for want of which men otherwise intelligent so often fail in their undertakings.

For three days they marched on without interruption, over the sandy plains, and through swamps and rice-fields, only resting from the fierce heat of noon in groves, or on the banks of some stream, or encamping for the night in the neighbourhood of some lonely village, and filling the natives with wonder as to what could be the object of their advance. The half-naked peasant checked his bullocks and leaned on his rude plough, the water-carrier laid down his gourds, and the weaver left his loom for a moment to gaze on the

strangers as they passed; but all these persons soon resumed their several occupations, with the feeling that it was no business of theirs what new military enterprise was on foot, so long as Rajah and Nabob, Mahratta and Feringhee, would but leave them undisturbed in their poor and humble lot. Even the Brahmin only raised his eyes for a brief glance at the intruders, and then returned to his studies or his devotions; while the mendicant continued his strange penances and contortions, or begged at the road-side as he would of any other travellers. It seemed likely that none would think it worth while to give information of the approach of the invading force.

But, on the fourth day of their march they reached a considerable town, named Conjeveram, and saw the Great Pagoda, and heard the hum of innumerable voices from the Bazaar. And here they were joined by a light, airy figure, who came running nimbly over the ground, and was at once recognized by Clive as one of his native scouts. Having made his salam, this man proceeded to communicate his intelligence.

"I come direct from Arcot, sahib," he said.
"I see all they do there."

"Is the fort deserted?"

"No, sahib. They have eleven, twelve hundred men in it, and guns, and powder."

"Do they know we are coming?"

"Not yet; but they soon will. The Nabob's officers will send news from here. They have swift runners in the Bazaar, and camels, and horses."

"You are too tired to go further?"

"No, sahib. I never tired. I go on for as many days as you please."

"Well, then, you shall take a letter for me to Madras. Get something to eat, and be ready to start at a moment's notice. There will be rest and rupees for you at the end of your journey."

When the messenger had departed, Clive said to his officers: "I have sent for the two 18-pounders that we had not time to bring away with us. There is a garrison in the fort, and we may have to batter the walls. But I still hope to take it by surprise."

They were soon again on the march, and two days more brought them within a short distance of Arcot, when suddenly the sky grew black with clouds, and all the signs appeared of an approaching tempest. As the

storm gathered, the Sepoys looked anxiously at each other, and seemed desirous to halt. Clive urged his troops to advance, but when the first peal of thunder burst with a loud crash over their heads, and the vivid lightning of the tropics flashed in their faces through torrents of descending rain, a deputation of native soldiers came forward to beg their commander not to proceed further at present.

"What is it they are saying, Nevil?" asked Clive.

"They say, that the thunder is a bad omen, and that they dare not despise the warning."

"Confound their omens!" muttered a young English ensign. "They are afraid of a wet skin, I suppose."

"No, no, my dear Glass," said Clive; "we must not deal with them in that fashion. Explain to them, Nevil, that they are now under the English flag, and that all omens must be interpreted as understood by Englishmen. Tell them, that we think the storm a *good* omen for those who dare to face it, and only bad for cowards who shrink before it. You may add, that we English are going

on, at all events, and that if they choose to lag behind, like a bevy of old women, we can take Arcot without them."

Nevil hastened to translate these words of his chief, and spoke warmly and eloquently in the same sense. The Sepoys looked somewhat abashed, but still hesitated and whispered together, till one old man said aloud, as the English moved forward: "It would be a shame to let the Feringhees do all the work. The women would laugh in our beards. And the thunder is not always a bad omen. Not if it comes from both sides."

Just then, a loud clap on the left hand was answered by one still louder on the right, and the heavens from the zenith to the horizon were enveloped in a bright sheet of fire.

"It is good!" said the old Sepoy. "Let us follow the brave Feringhees!"

And forward, through the blinding storm, marched the little army, till the mosques and minarets of Arcot gleamed momentarily in the distance, revealed by the frequent flashes that penetrated the deluge of rain. Then Clive halted at last, and sent on his scouts to reconnoitre. The news they brought back

exceeded the most sanguine hopes of the invaders.

When the garrison first heard with astonishment that an enemy was advancing to attack them, they had made some hasty preparations to defend the fort and city, and had sent out their spies to ascertain the nature and amount of the hostile forces. But when they were informed that these were already close at hand, and that they had been seen marching unconcerned through the midst of that terrible tempest, contrary to all the usages and traditions of the country, the native troops were seized with a sudden panic, and resolved to evacuate the place. Clive was assured that they had already retired from the defences, and that he might enter the citadel without striking a blow.

He lost no time in taking advantage of his good fortune. Boldly, but cautiously, he marched into the open city, and passing through 100,000 spectators, who gazed in silent and motionless admiration at the small band of daring adventurers, he obtained possession of the fort without opposition. There he found eight pieces of cannon, and stores of lead and gunpowder, besides a

large sum of money which the merchants had deposited for security. But this he scrupulously returned to its owners, and thus conciliated the good will of some of the principal inhabitants.

The next care of the young captain was to collect provisions and to prepare for a siege. He foresaw that he would not be long left in quiet possession of his conquest, and that even the late garrison would recover their courage, when they found how few were the assailants before whom they had retired in confusion. He determined, however, to anticipate their movements.

“We must not give them leisure to think over it, Nevil,” he said. “We will find out where they are, and beat up their quarters. They must not suppose we are hiding from them behind stone walls.”

So he sallied out in quest of them, and discovered some five hundred foot and six hundred horse, drawn up near a small fort about six miles from the town. But they did not choose to risk an engagement, and retreated to the hills in their rear, when the English came within musket-shot. Two days after, however, when their numbers

had increased to about two thousand, they waited for the attack in a strong position, from which they were driven by Lieutenant Bulkley and Ensign Glass. Still nothing decisive had taken place, and when some days elapsed without further sallies, and the native force had been augmented to three thousand men, they advanced with renewed confidence, and encamped within three miles of Arcot. But Clive was not the man to leave them in the enjoyment of their fancied security. At dead of night, when they were all wrapped in sleep, he fell upon their camp by surprise, traversed it from end to end, and dispersed them in panic terror and precipitous flight. And all this was accomplished with scarcely any loss.

It was in these actions that Nevil gained his first experience in the art of war. He kept close to the side of his gallant chief, watched his various movements with intense interest, and marvelled at the qualities he displayed. It was not only the cool, determined courage, but the fertility of resources, the rapid conception of a plan, the instant decision to carry it out, and the power of making others comprehend and execute his

designs, that stamped him with the mark of a true commander. In those few days, he had already inspired his troops with implicit faith in his leadership, and all of them, European or Indian, would have followed him into any danger.

But now the two 18-pounders from Madras were approaching under a feeble escort, and Clive, fearing that they would be intercepted on the road, despatched the greater part of his force to meet and bring them in, so that he was left in the fort with only thirty Englishmen and fifty Sepoys. The enemy, becoming aware of this, returned to the town in considerable numbers, and advanced under cover of the night to attack the fort. But Clive was prepared to receive them with musketry and grenades, and although they got possession of the neighbouring houses, and poured their fire into the fort for several hours, they were repulsed in every attempt to enter, and at daybreak abandoned the enterprise and fell back in disorder. The inhabitants, who had been well treated by the English, showed no disposition to join the assailants, and the detachments returned in safety with the convoy and the guns.

Meanwhile, swift posts were speeding to every part of India, with news of these extraordinary events. Chunda Sahib, in his camp before Trichinopoly, just as he thought the prize was about to fall into his hands, was astounded by the intelligence that his own capital was in the grasp of the enemy. Dupleix, congratulating himself at Pondicherry that the power of France was at length established without a rival, heard with almost incredulous dismay that the English flag was waving on the walls of Arcot. But the first feeling of consternation was soon succeeded by one of indignant shame, when they knew how small a force had effected this great change. No time was to be lost in recapturing the place, and chastising the presumptuous invaders. Chunda Sahib at once detached four thousand men from before Trichinopoly, his son Rajah Sahib brought one hundred and fifty Europeans from Pondicherry, and Mortiz Ali, the cruel and treacherous Governor of Vellore, advanced with two thousand troops to their assistance. They were joined by the fugitive garrison and the other forces collected in the neighbourhood of Arcot, and entering the city they proceeded to invest the fort.

"We shall have to stand a siege, Nevil," said Clive, on the day when Rajah Sahib established his head-quarters in the Nabob's palace, "and we have only ourselves to trust to, for I do not well see where we are to look for aid. But never mind, my boy! we will show them what stuff we are made of. I do not mean to let them sit down quietly to their work, but will treat them to a sally to-morrow morning. It will be somewhat hazardous, and I do not think we shall succeed in driving them out of the town. But, in our circumstances, we must teach both them and our own men that we are not afraid of odds. Above all, we must have a fling at those Frenchmen, and prove to the natives, that other Feringhees can fight as well as the subjects of the *Grand Monarque*."

And the next morning Clive said to his officers: "Here is a map of the town, gentlemen—roughly drawn, but sufficient for our purpose. You see these two streets which run northward from the fort, and this cross-street which unites them. I will call the former West Street and East Street, and the latter North Street. The Nabob's palace is in the last. Now, I mean to advance by West

Street with our field-pieces, while Ensign Glass marches to our support by East Street. Lieutenant Revel will command the artillery, Trenwith and Brooke will go with me, and we must try and place the enemy between two fires. If we cannot carry the Nabob's palace, we must, at all events, make it rather hot for Rajah Sahib's residence, and convince him that we are not asleep."

The plan was instantly executed, and Clive advanced so rapidly, that he met with no opposition till he came to the cross-street, where he found the French drawn up with their guns in front of the palace. A fierce cannonade ensued, at the distance of only thirty yards, the French in a few minutes were driven into the palace, and had the other party of English arrived in time, the sally would have been perfectly successful. But Ensign Glass had encountered an advanced guard of three or four hundred Sepoys in East Street, and although the brave young soldier dislodged them from their position, and scattered them before him, the delay was sufficient to prevent his rendering the required service. Meanwhile, Nevil had pushed forward to seize the French guns, and

cheering on his men had nearly accomplished his object, when Rajah Sahib's troops, who had rushed into the houses on either side of the street, opened such a fire of musketry from the windows, that Nevil saw most of his immediate followers falling around him, and Clive was heard shouting from the rear: "Back, all of you! Back to the shelter of the Choultry!"

The Choultry was a large building intended for the reception of travellers, closed on three sides with walls, but open in front, where the roof was supported by a colonnade. The quick eye of Clive had seen that the pillars would afford cover for his men, and he sprang forward, to withdraw them into that place of safety. As he did so, a French Sepoy, leaning from a window, pointed his musket directly at the commander's head; but Lieutenant Trenwith, who perceived the movement, threw himself between, and pulled his captain out of the way—only to divert the aim to his own body, and sink mortally wounded at his leader's side. The rest retreated to the Choultry, and there made good their ground against the enemy, retiring to load and stepping forth to fire; until they had cleared a

free passage, and were able to return to the fort unmolested, with their guns and their wounded men. Amongst the latter was Lieutenant Revel, their only artillery officer.

“Thank God you are safe, Nevil!” said Clive, when they were alone together that evening. “You all did well, and we have shown the enemy that they have no easy task before them—but the day has cost us too dear. We must not venture on any more such escapades, but confine ourselves for the present to acting on the defensive. Poor Trenwith! he died for me and for my rashness.”

“He died in the discharge of his duty, and for the honour of Old England,” said Nevil.

“Yes! not the last, by many, that will water this soil of India with their blood. But a truce to sad thoughts, when we have so much work in hand. You will find that the siege will now begin in earnest.”

CHAPTER III.

THE SEVEN WEEKS' SIEGE.

CLIVE's prediction was soon fulfilled. Every avenue to the fort was blocked up by the enemy, who took possession of the houses in the neighbourhood, and opened their fire under cover of these buildings. The garrison had already attempted to destroy those nearest to the walls, but the strength of the masonry had hitherto resisted their efforts, and the smallness of their numbers had obliged them to direct their chief labours to repair the internal defences. The fort was large in extent, the wall in many places ruinous, the rampart narrow, the parapet low, the ditch partly fordable, and partly dry or choked up. The passage to the two gates was by a causeway, instead of a drawbridge. Altogether, the place seemed little capable of sustaining a siege.

It was resolved to make another trial to destroy the two nearest houses, and Ensign Glass volunteered for the service. This young man was brave after Clive's own heart, but unfortunately little skilled as an engineer. He was let down from the wall by ropes at midnight, with ten men and some barrels of gunpowder, and at once set to work to blow up the houses. The explosion took place, and shook the surrounding buildings, but failed of its intended effect; and as the party were hurrying back, the rope by which Glass was being drawn up broke, and he was precipitated into the ditch below. He was rescued by his companions, but was so much hurt by the fall as to be incapable of further duty, and thus the little garrison was deprived of the services of a third officer.

"Trenwith gone! Glass and Revel disabled!" said Clive to Nevil, as they stood in the early morning on one of the towers, and looked out upon the wide area of the now silent city. "Our little staff is already sadly diminished."

"And how are we to supply their places?" asked Nevil.

"We must do double work, my boy, and

try and make use of some of the sergeants. There are steady, intelligent fellows amongst them, who will soon learn their duty as officers. But the next thing to do is to get rid of superfluous mouths. I have taken stock of our provisions, and find they will hardly last out sixty days. We must send away the inhabitants of the fort."

Accordingly, the resident natives were informed that they must collect what belonged to them, and join their countrymen in the town below. So strange was the fascination which Clive exercised over the minds of men, and so just and wise his management of affairs, that these people had become attached to his rule, and were very unwilling to leave. There was, however, no alternative, and they were dismissed under shelter of a flag of truce, and allowed to pass unquestioned through the outposts of the enemy. Only a few artificers were permitted to remain in the fort, and these afterwards rendered good service to the garrison.

"I shall never quite understand these Hindoos," said Nevil. "Here we are invading their country, and yet the people of this place seemed rather glad than otherwise at our

coming, and certainly those who have just left us were very loth to go. Have they no patriotism or national spirit?"

"In one sense they are patriotic enough," answered Clive. "They are strongly attached to their homes, their customs, and the little communities in which they live. But you must remember that their governments have been for ages in the hands of one oppressor after the other, and we cannot judge them by English rules. If a foreign enemy landed in England, we should forget all our divisions, and Whigs and Tories, Churchmen and Dissenters, every rank and every class, from the king on his throne to the beggar at the corner of the street, would unite in defence of our laws and liberties. But it cannot be so with the people here. Hitherto, wars and revolutions have brought them nothing but one tyrant in exchange for another, and I suppose they do not much care whether Chunda Sahib or Mahomed Ali is to have the shearing of their fleece."

"Then you think they look upon all governments with indifference?"

"They have not had much to choose between their different masters. But I think

they might come to like a strong government, justly administered, which, protecting them from Mahomedan despots and Mahratta plunderers, would leave them in the quiet enjoyment of their own ways. Such a government we might possibly give them."

"But we are strangers to them in everything—in blood, language, manners, and religion!"

"Yes! and therefore the more likely to prove impartial. But I say, Nevil," cried Clive, with a sudden burst of laughter, "here we are talking of giving a government to the country, when we are shut up in this fortress, with quite enough to do to save our own skins from the enemy!"

"You seem to relish the joke, Robert?"

"I never was in better spirits. You see I am playing a great game for high stakes, and I cannot for the life of me feel despondent."

"Then you think we shall win?"

"We will try—and, at all events, we will hold out to the last. Like the man in the old ballad you are so fond of, we will fight on our stumps before they shall have Arcot."

"How many do you think they are?"

"Ten thousand at least, and they may be

reinforced to any extent. But they have to get in, you see, before they can get us out."

"Hark! they are beginning to fire again."

"They will not do much harm by blazing away at the walls with musketry. We have only to keep from exposing ourselves too much on the ramparts. When they have their cannon in position, it will be more serious. At present, they are wasting their gunpowder, and giving us time to go on with our preparations to receive them."

"What is the work to-day?"

"Every man has his orders already. What I want you to do, Nevil, is to mix with our native soldiers and artisans, to talk to them in their own language, and to gain their confidence as much as possible. It is a most important service."

And so it proved; for one of the workmen, who had remained behind, soon came to Nevil with information of the highest moment. He knew, he said, of an old aqueduct, by which the fort could be drained of every drop of water, and if this was discovered by the enemy, the garrison would be entirely at their mercy. He was at once taken to Clive, who filled his turban with rupees, and gave

instant orders to stop the dangerous passage. But the natives showed themselves useful in many other ways. Though the fort was now closely beleaguered, they could always manage to pass to and fro, and to obtain intelligence of what was happening without. They would slide down stealthily from the walls by help of a rope, creep silently on hands and knees through pickets and close by sentinels, and assume any character that was required to carry out their instructions.

"Whatever they may be as soldiers," said Nevil, "it must be confessed that they are the very best of spies."

And now, when some days had been spent in a continual, but fruitless discharge of fire-arms, a native messenger appeared at one of the gates, and asked to be led into the presence of the commander. He was questioned by some of the officers, but would only communicate his message to Clive himself, and when at length he was admitted to see him, he refused to speak, until every one had retired but Nevil, who acted as interpreter. Then he said, that he came from Mortiz Ali, the grim lion of Vellore, and he showed the signet-ring of that chief, as a

voucher for the truth of his mission. He went on to declare, that his master had fallen out with Rajah Sahib, having been treated by him with little respect, and had resolved to have his revenge. He had therefore withdrawn his troops to one quarter of the city, and if Clive would make another attack on the Nabob's palace, Mortiz Ali would be ready to assist him with his whole force. It was only necessary to agree on the time and the signals.

Clive listened to all this with the gravest interest, and appeared to enter on the plan with calm deliberation. He said, however, that he must know more about it before he could make up his mind, and he sent back the messenger to Mortiz Ali for information as to various points. When the man was gone, Nevil looked at his friend with some astonishment, and asked him if he really intended to trust those fellows.

A smile played on the lips of the young captain as he answered: "I will trust them as I would so many serpents, but there is no harm in keeping them amused with their own devices. It will gain time, at all events; but they must think us very shallow to fall

into such a trap. Do you know who this Mortiz Ali is?"

"I have heard vaguely of some of his exploits."

"He is the blackest villain that ever escaped hanging. He murdered his own cousin and brother-in-law Subder Ali, and was concerned in the treacherous slaughter of poor young Seid Mahomed, the son of that unfortunate prince. He would stick at no crime, and yet is so cowardly, that he lives in perpetual fear of poison, and will not touch a morsel of food until it has been tasted by others. He a lion forsooth! he is more like a filthy jackal."

"Then you think this is a mere trick?"

"I am sure of it. Not that Mortiz Ali would scruple for a moment to betray his friend Rajah Sahib, if he could gain anything by it; but all his interests lie the other way. I'll tell you what we will do, Nevil. You shall choose the keenest of our spies, and set him to follow this messenger, and watch all his proceedings. He must not move a step without our knowing it."

These instructions were obeyed to the letter, and it was found that the man went

direct to Mortiz Ali, and that the troops had really been withdrawn to the quarter named. But Clive was not to be taken off his guard, and when the messenger returned with fresh proposals, he still avoided giving him a decisive answer, and kept him in play for some days longer, while he continued his inquiries. At length, when the final message was brought, that all was prepared, and that it was time to act, Clive was already in possession of the information he required; and after listening to every detail of Mortiz Ali's plan, as related with the utmost minuteness by his plausible envoy, the captain turned suddenly to Nevil with a significant glance and said: "Now ask him where he was yesterday at midnight."

The man started at this question, and appeared not to understand it.

"Ask him," continued Clive, "what he did at the Nabob's palace, and what message he carried from Mortiz Ali to Rajah Sahib."

The messenger grew more confused, but did not quite lose his presence of mind. He said it was necessary to keep up appearances, and that he had been sent to Rajah Sahib to lull him into security.

“Ask him if that was the reason why the guards were at once doubled, and cannon planted to command the streets by which we were to make the attack, and which Mortiz Ali promised should be left open. And now ask him what is the just doom of a traitor.”

When these words were interpreted by Nevil, the self-command of the messenger seemed utterly to fail him, and he exhibited every sign of the most abject terror. He flung himself at Clive's feet, and commenced an agonizing appeal for mercy; but the Englishman interrupted him with a smile of contemptuous pity.

“Put the poor wretch out of his misery, Nevil,” he said. “He did his best for his employers, and I am not fond of treading upon a reptile, if I can help it. Tell him to go back to those who sent him, and say to them, that if they hope to win Arcot, they must fight with other weapons than lies and treachery. And tell him, moreover, that if he is ever found again within the walls of this fortress, I will send his head as a present to that rascal his master.”

The man could scarcely believe in his own safety, and would have kissed the ground

before Clive in his humiliation and gratitude ; but the latter turned impatiently away from him, and summoned a sergeant to conduct him to the gate of the fortress.

"See that he comes to no harm, Johnson," he said, "but do not let him communicate with any of our Sepoys. I hope he has not been tampering with them already."

"Please your honour," answered the sergeant, a fine specimen of an English soldier, "our Sepoys are as true as steel."

"You ought to know something about them, Johnson, as you have lived amongst them, and speak their lingo. But I would not trust our friend here in their company."

"All right, your honour ! Mum's the word, and sharp's the action."

So saying, the sergeant marched off his charge without further parley, and never left him till he was beyond the walls of the citadel.

The disappointed conspirators showed their rage by opening their fire with redoubled fury, and by this time French guns and gunners had arrived from Pondicherry, and a formidable cannonade commenced. The English returned the fire calmly and steadily,

but the French batteries were so well served, that Clive's two 18-pounders were soon dismounted, and as he kept his field-pieces in reserve to resist a storm, the enemy proceeded with little interruption to batter down the wall between two of the towers, and in six days made a practicable breach of fifty feet. Then they found that Clive was prepared for every emergency, and had taken his measures to check their further advance. He had set resolutely to work with his garrison, and had dug one trench just under the rampart, and another at some distance behind, had pulled down the wall of a house to the height of a breast-work, and from it had carried a row of palisadoes, along both ends of the trenches up to the parapet. He had strewed the intervening space with those pointed iron stars called crow's feet, and other impediments to an attacking force, and had planted cannon on the towers flanking the breach, and on the roofs opposite. When they saw him thus ready to meet them, the enemy thought it prudent to defer the assault, until they had made a second breach in another direction.

But Clive was determined to show them, that he was not only able to defend himself,

but to threaten their security in their own quarters. There was a huge piece of ordnance in the fort, brought from Delhi in the time of Aurengzebe, and said (with oriental exaggeration) to have been drawn by one thousand yoke of oxen, while the iron balls belonging to it weighed each seventy-two pounds. Having strengthened one of the towers, and raised a mound of earth on the top of it, Clive hoisted this cannon to the summit of the mound, so as to command the city below, and then sent one of the shot right through the Nabob's palace, to the great consternation of Rajah Sahib and his officers. It was not thought expedient to fire this piece more than once a day, and Clive always chose the time when the leaders of the enemy were assembled at their headquarters. Unfortunately, on the fourth day, the cannon burst.

As if in retaliation for this affront, the enemy filled up a large house with earth, and raised a similar mound on the top of it, at a height sufficient to command the fort. Clive suffered them to proceed, until they had completed their work and planted their cannon; when he opened fire with such

effect, that in less than an hour the mound crumbled away, and carried fifty men with it in its fall, most of whom were either killed or disabled.

The enemy now erected their batteries against other parts of the wall, and though constantly annoyed by the musketry of the fort, and several times driven from their guns, persevered in effecting a second breach. But here again they were counterworked by the garrison and its indomitable chief, who raised new defences as fast as the old ones were destroyed, and were always on the alert, and ready to dispute every inch of ground.

And so the siege went on, week after week, with varying fortune, but apparently with only one inevitable result. In spite of the heroic temper of the defenders of Arcot, their situation was becoming daily more and more critical. Their small number was growing smaller, reduced by sickness, wounds, and death, their stock of provisions was getting perilously low, and they were hemmed in on all sides without any prospect of relief. Their countrymen at Madras were most anxious to aid them if they could, and now having received some recruits from England,

they sent Lieutenant Innis, with one hundred Europeans and two hundred Sepoys, to endeavour to reach the fort. But this little party, being attacked and surrounded by the way, was compelled to retreat after a sharp action, and to take refuge at a place called Poonamalee. .

One hope indeed remained. There was a Mahratta chief named Morari Row, one of those warriors who sell their swords for hire, who had been engaged by the Regent of Mysore in the early part of these transactions, to assist Mahomed Ali in opposing the progress of the French arms. This adventurer, with six thousand of his wild horsemen, was still hovering about the foot of the western mountains, waiting to see how matters turned before he declared himself. To him Clive managed to convey a message, soliciting his instant help; and Morari Row returned for answer, that hitherto he had not known that the English were able to fight, but that now, being convinced of their quality, he would not fail to come to the aid of such brave men as the defenders of Arcot.

Meanwhile, it became necessary to reduce

the rations of the garrison to a smaller allowance every day, and the fear of famine was already upon them. It was at this juncture, that a deputation of Sepoys waited upon Clive, and his first thought was, that they were about to complain of their privations, and to urge him to surrender the fort. He was prepared to encounter them with the stern determination of his iron will; but even his strong nature was touched and melted, when Nevil explained to him the real character of their demand, proving, more than anything else could have done, the fidelity and attachment with which he had inspired the native troops.

They could live, they said, on less food than was required by Europeans. If, therefore, he would give them the Canjee, or water in which the rice was boiled, and which formed a kind of thin gruel, they would abandon their share of the rice to the Feringhees, who could not subsist without the grain.

"Tell them," answered Clive, "that we will live and die together like brothers, and that I will divide the last handful of rice fairly with the meanest soldier in the service. But tell them also, if they will continue to

trust me, that, before that time comes, they shall see the backs of the enemy."

Some rumour had probably reached Rajah Sahib, that the Mahrattas were in motion, for he now sent a flag of truce to Clive, proposing terms for the surrender of the fortress. He not only offered honourable conditions to the garrison, but he promised a large sum of money to their commander, if he would consent to deliver up his charge; and he added, that, if these offers were not at once accepted, he would storm the place, and put every man to the sword.

"These fellows make me sick, Nevil," said Clive, when he understood the message. "Tell that oily gentleman in the turban, that English officers are not accustomed to receive bribes from the enemy; that, if Rajah Sahib wants the fortress, he must come and take it; but that I have too good an opinion of his prudence, to think he will dare encounter us hand to hand, with no better troops than the rabble of which his army is composed."

The messenger would have insisted further, but was at once silenced by Clive's peremptory gesture, and Nevil endeavoured to ex-

plain to him, that the insulting offer of a bribe was alone sufficient to put an end to the conference. He was ordered to withdraw immediately, and as soon as he had passed the gates, the flag of truce was pulled down. Numbers of the enemy, however, had crowded to the ditch, and were engaged in parleying with the Sepoys, and trying to persuade them to desert. When Clive was informed of this, he sent Nevil to warn them to retire; but they persisted in disregarding the injunction, and continued with the utmost volubility to pour out their appeals and remonstrances to the native troops.

"They will not listen to me," said Nevil ruefully, "and I cannot induce them to fall back, or to hold their tongues."

"You are a bad logician," returned Clive, "and they do not see the force of your arguments. I must try some of mine, which are sure to be effectual. Go and give them a volley of musketry, Johnson!"

The order was obeyed, and the first fire dispersed the motley crowd, which yielded without difficulty to this clear and conclusive mode of reasoning.

"The captain has such a winning way with

him!" said Johnson. "There's no standing against him, when he means to carry his point!"

But though Clive retained all his calmness and resolution, he was not insensible to the ever-increasing danger of his position. The end of the seventh week of the siege was nearly come, and no succour had yet arrived. It was true that flying bands of Mahratta horsemen had been seen in the neighbourhood of the city, and a message reached Clive from Poonamalee, that Lieutenant Innis had been joined by Captain Kilpatrick with a small reinforcement, and that his countrymen were once more attempting to march to his relief. But sickness was increasing, provisions were failing, the second breach had been extended to a breadth of ninety feet, and the assault might be expected from one hour to the other. It was in this time of suspense, that the great qualities of the leader shone out with redoubled lustre. While he took his precautions with the coolness and prescience of a veteran, he displayed the bright and hopeful nature of youth in all his dealings with his men. Whatever might be his secret apprehensions, he now almost

always wore a cheerful countenance, and had a kind word and a pleasant smile for every one. Nevil often wondered if this could be the same Clive, whom his comrades at Fort St. George had pronounced morose and taciturn, and whom he had so frequently seen oppressed with a weight of melancholy. Circumstances, which would have reduced others to despair, had only stirred the blood in his veins, and roused the high spirit of the hero.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GRAND ASSAULT.

It was midnight on the 13th of November, 1751. The siege had now lasted seven weeks, and a week or two more must exhaust the provisions of the garrison. Clive, who had all day long been superintending the works, and visiting the various posts, was seated with Nevil over the scanty supper which alone they allowed themselves, when one of their spies brought them the important intelligence, that the enemy intended to attack with all their forces at the first dawn of morning.

The Hindoo went on to explain, that it was one of the great festivals of the Mahomedans. In it they celebrated the martyrdom of the Fatimites, the sons of Ali and grandsons of the Prophet, and they believed, that whoever

at this time fell in battle against the infidels would atone for all the sins of his life, and at once be admitted to the highest heaven. Their whole army was fired with the utmost religious enthusiasm, and having partaken plentifully of the intoxicating plant called bang, which inflames the rage of its votaries almost to madness, they were eagerly demanding to be led against the enemy, and would no doubt advance to the assault with irresistible fury.

"Then we shall have to deal with a drunken mob," said Clive. "Come, Nevil, we will once more make the round of the walls, and see that every one is at his post. Bring the lantern, my boy, or we may not be able to find our way. I am glad our assailants are going to wait for daylight."

"It will only enable them to count our numbers better," said Nevil.

"Oh! as for that," returned Clive, laughing, "they are no doubt aware of the vast extent of our forces! I made up the account of our effective soldiers yesterday, and find we have just 80 Europeans and 120 Sepoys left. Not too many, certainly, to defend these old rotten fortifications; but what does

Henry V. say in Shakspeare, about *the fewer men, the greater share of honour?* ”

“I scarcely think they had as long odds against them at Agincourt,” replied Nevil ; “but there, to be sure, our enemies were French knights and nobles.”

“Well, whatever they were, we must show ourselves not unworthy of our ancestors. I told you, before you came with me, that we should have some sharp work. By this time to-morrow, we shall know more about it.”

“If we have not ceased to care for this world’s business,” thought Nevil, as he followed his chief in silence, and heard him give the final directions to his men. Every possible contingency was foreseen and provided for, and when Clive returned to the chamber he occupied in one of the towers, he threw himself exhausted on a couch, and said in a tone of weariness : “Do you think you can keep awake, Nevil?”

“Oh, yes! I am sure I could not sleep to-night.”

“Well, then, you shall watch beside me, and wake me at the first alarm. I must try and get a little rest, so as to be quite fresh for the day’s work. If you grow tired, call

one of the others to take your place. Good night!"

And turning on his side, with the air of one who has finished his labours for the present, the man who had to encounter the perils and bear the responsibility of that momentous crisis, closed his eyes in happy forgetfulness, and slept as calmly as an infant.

"It is strange," said Nevil to himself, as he gazed on the slumbering form of his friend and leader, "that he can sleep so quietly in such moments. The last desperate struggle is at hand, not for victory only, but for life, and before another noon, or another sunset, this fortress may be the grave of its defenders. It is neither weak nor cowardly, but simply natural, that serious thoughts should come to us at such a time—thoughts of home and friends at least, if not of the unknown future. Yet Clive sleeps as on the eve of a festival, and as if no care was on his mind. Not that he is hard and insensible, as some folks imagine, for he is a warm friend, strongly attached to his family, and if ever a man was in love, he is in love with Margaret Maskeleyne. But I suppose he can rule his feelings as he does the wills of others, and that he is

like Charles XII. in Mr. Samuel Johnson's new poem that my mother sent me—

‘Unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain.’

Well, I can make no pretence to such stoicism. Whatever happens, I hope I shall do my duty; but I cannot help thinking of poor old Warwickshire, and my dear mother, and whether I shall ever see them any more. It is now seven years since I left them, and I have grown from a boy into a man, and many things must be changed in the old places; but my heart is still there, and all the past comes vividly to my memory on such a night as this. Whether I live or die, God bless the old home, and the old country, and the dear old faces! My last thought will be of them.”

And Nevil Brooke, not being a strong-minded philosopher, but a simple, true-hearted Christian gentleman, knelt down in that silent room, by the side of the sleeping warrior, and poured out his soul in prayer to the Father of us all; and sacred words which had been familiar to him from childhood brought him the hope and the consolation that are needed in hours of trial.

Then he rose, and looked forth into the gloom, and listened for the hum of gathering numbers and the sound of trampling feet. But the city seemed hushed as death ; and if he sometimes saw the faint glimmer of a light, or caught the dull murmur of distant voices, it was only for a moment, and then all was again dark and silent. The night appeared endless, in that long interval of feverish and wearisome expectation. At length, just as the first streak of day was visible in the eastern sky, three bombs shot suddenly into the air from different parts of the city, and the rush of an advancing host burst ominously on the ear.

Nevil flew to the couch where Clive was reposing, and laid his hand upon the arm of the sleeper, and called him by his name. The first impulse of the roused soldier was to spring fiercely up and seize his sword ; but when he recognized his friend, he broke into a light laugh.

"You ran some risk, Nevil," he said, "in waking me so abruptly. What is the matter ?"

"The enemy are upon us, Clive !"

"Then it was time to wake, and I suppose

we shall hardly be able to get our breakfast. I ordered double rations to be served out this morning, for it is ill fighting on empty stomachs, and if this attack succeeds, we shall not want any more provisions. But keep up your courage, Nevil. Something tells me it will *not* succeed!"

With these words he led the way to the ramparts, and found every man at his post, ready to receive the foe. When they knew that their young commander was in the midst of them, the garrison gave a hearty cheer, which was answered from without by loud yells and indescribable noises; and now, as the light increased, they could see their assailants advancing in four main divisions to the onslaught. Two of these were destined for the breaches, and two for the attack on the gates, whilst a vast multitude with ladders came flocking towards every part of the walls that offered a chance of access. And to all these forces, numbered by thousands, Clive could only oppose two hundred men; but his teaching and his example had converted them into two hundred heroes.

"Look there, Nevil," he said. "Do you see those elephants with iron plates on their

heads, that they are driving on to the causeways? What do you think they are for?"

"To act as rams, I should think, in the Roman fashion."

"That's it exactly. They are intended to batter down the gates. But we need not trouble ourselves much about them. Musketry and grenades will keep the poor beasts in check. And as for those fellows with ladders, they cannot get over the ditch in any numbers, and we can easily topple them down. The serious work will be at the breaches."

All fell out as Clive predicted. The elephants came rushing over the causeways with a roar, but being encountered with a shower of bullets, blinded by the fire, and smarting with wounds, they soon turned furiously on their drivers, and trampled upon the troops in their rear. The stragglers, who managed to pass the ditch with ladders, were picked off by shot from the walls, or thrown down before they could reach the parapet. But the full tide of war set in towards the yawning breaches, and thither poured two living streams, like swollen tor-

rents in their rage, with shouts, and tumult, and clashing weapons—two streams of armed fanatics, frenzied with religious zeal and physical excitement, mad, intoxicated, terrible, resistless. It seemed as if they must sweep all before them, and that nothing could stop the progress of that tremendous onset.

“Keep cool, and reserve your fire!” was all that Clive said, as he stood calm and motionless, watching the narrower of the two breaches, in front of which the ditch was fordable. He knew that there was sufficient water in front of the other and wider breach, to check the advance for a time.

Onward rolled the sinuous, many-coloured, turbaned multitude, plunging, wading, climbing, swarming into the breach, with wild discharges of musketry, with loud cries to Allah and the Prophet, stumbling over the broken ground, stumbling over each other, but meeting with no resistance till they reached the first of the inner trenches. The breach was now blocked with men, and numbers were gathered at the foot of it, waiting for their turn to enter. Then Clive gave the word: “Fire!”

It was delivered at close quarters, and fell

heavily on the struggling crowd. In those days, the process of loading was long and tedious; but the little band of defenders had prepared a relay of muskets ready charged, which the rear rank handed to those in front as fast as they could use them, and then loaded again for them, and so kept up a constant supply. The fire was steady and continuous, and every shot told. The foremost of the assailants dropped dead in the midst of their passionate efforts, or staggered back, wounded and bleeding, on those behind. Meanwhile, the cannon began to thunder from the house-tops, and ploughed deep furrows in the dense masses that were thronging the breach. And from the summit of the towers, bombs with lighted fusees were thrown down upon the groups beyond, as they sat huddled together on the margin of the moat, in anxious expectation of the next opportunity to advance.

In spite of their enthusiasm, the Mahomedans recoiled before this rough reception, but only to return again and again to the attack. With the fierceness of tigers, they clambered over the bodies of the slain, threw themselves in reckless fury on spikes and palisadoes, and

strove to carry the trench by sheer force of numbers. And each time they were encountered and repulsed with the same cool, undaunted, invincible courage, and fell back, like waves breaking against a rocky coast, before the steady fire of that small handful of Englishmen.

Nevil had early derived, from song and story, a boyish taste for the romance of war, and had often indulged his fancy in pictures of battle; but he was by no means naturally fitted for scenes of blood and violence. Like the better part of his countrymen, he detested all cruelty, and the sight of gaping wounds and ghastly corpses was loathsome and repulsive in his eyes. Yet, once engaged in action, he showed the high spirit of his race, and bore himself manfully in the hottest part of the struggle. He was leaning over the breast-work, loading, firing, and exposing himself rashly to the enemy, when the voice of Clive recalled him from his post of danger.

"That will do, Nevil," he said. "I want you for special service. Run and see what is going on at the other breach."

Nevil darted off at his utmost speed, and soon returned with the required information.

“They found the water too deep,” he said, “but they are launching a raft, on which they hope to cross the ditch. Our Sepoys are blazing away at them with musketry, and Lieutenant Bulkley is trying to bring the guns to bear on them, but I think he is firing wide of his mark.”

“Then I must go myself, and you shall come with me. Our fellows here know what they are about, and will be able to hold their own.”

When the commander reached one of the two towers, which flanked the second and wider breach, he saw that no time must be lost, if the enemy were to be prevented from passing the moat. The raft was already launched and crowded with men, and was rapidly approaching with its freight, when Clive took the management of one of the field-pieces into his own hands. Although he had never been trained as an artilleryman, he had worked hard of late to master the science of gunnery, and now it was proved how well he had profited by his labours. The cannon was at once pointed exactly in the right direction, the first fire swept the raft from end to end, and the three or four follow-

ing discharges threw the enemy into such confusion, that they overset their frail vessel, and tumbled headlong into the ditch, where many of them were drowned, while the rest only saved themselves by swimming back to the shore.

When Clive had ascertained to his satisfaction that he had little to fear on this side, where the enemy were not likely to renew the attempt with any better success, he left Bulkley in charge of the guns, which he showed him how to handle with effect, and hastened to return with Nevil to his former position. There the combat still continued, and the Mahomedans came up repeatedly to the assault, although their fury was gradually spending itself, and every time the attack grew fainter. Some there were indeed, who, fighting with the energy of despair, forced their way over the fatal trench, and fell dead almost at the muzzle of the English muskets; while others greatly distinguished themselves by their valiant efforts to carry off their wounded and the lifeless bodies of their comrades. But the greater number had begun to lose heart and hope, their shouts died away in low, desponding murmurs, and it was soon

apparent that they were about to abandon the contest. Once more, a heavy fire was opened on the fortress; but the storming parties withdrew into the shelter of the streets and houses, the troops in reserve disappeared from the neighbourhood of the ditch, and every sign seemed to indicate that the grand assault was over.

“We have sickened them for the present,” said Clive, “but we must not relax our vigilance. Though the breach is choked with corpses, they may yet make another attempt.”

Soon after, the fire suddenly ceased, a flag of truce appeared at one of the gates, and the same messenger as before was admitted to the presence of the commander.

“What do they want now?” said Clive. “Have they sent to ask us to surrender, or to threaten us with worse consequences?”

“They have sent to ask for permission to bury their dead,” answered Nevil.

“Well, I will give them two hours for that purpose. I have no wish for an open charnel-house just under our noses. But make him understand clearly that the truce is only for two hours.”

Nevil delivered this ultimatum with becoming gravity; but he could not help smiling to himself as he remembered, that the man, who thus haughtily dictated terms, was still shut in by fifty times the number of his own troops, in a fortress almost bare of provisions !

“ And now we will have our dinner,” said Clive. “ They spoiled our breakfast, and we have earned an honest meal. There shall be no stint to-day, whatever may be to-morrow. If things come to the worst, Nevil, we can but die with swords in our hands, and so escape starvation ! ”

The rations were distributed accordingly, and the toil-worn garrison sat down once more to a sufficient repast. The English soldiers, talking and laughing over their meal, were loud in praise of their commander; and the Sepoys, as they prepared their food apart in their own fashion, spoke in whispers, and with a kind of superstitious awe, of the almost miraculous powers which they attributed to their young chieftain.

When the two hours had expired, the firing recommenced as before, and continued all that afternoon and evening, and far into the night.

But no attempt was made to renew the assault. At length, all was again silent; and when the sick and wounded had been cared for, the different posts visited, and the sentinels placed on their several stations, Clive and Nevil found themselves once more alone together, and felt the weariness which follows a time of great exertion.

"So ends the fiftieth day of the siege," said the commander to his friend, "and they have not yet made mince-meat of us. You all did your duty famously, but I confess I should like to hear the sound of the Mahratta drum."

"How much longer can we hold out?" asked Nevil.

"As long as we have food and powder, and I fear they are fast coming to an end. When these fail—but I think we shall be relieved before then. Do you believe in fate, Nevil?"

"I believe in Providence, Robert."

"Well, that is the better word. If we are sent to do a certain work, we shall have the means of doing it, in spite of men or devils. But you are very tired, and my own eyes are as heavy as lead. We must try and get a

little sleep, and trust to the soldiers on guard to wake us at break of day."

Nevil slept soundly that night, more soundly than for many nights before, and towards morning he had a strange dream. He thought he was at home in Warwickshire, and that his mother was beckoning to him from the terrace of the old Hall; but when he tried to go to her, he was always hindered by some impediment. Sometimes it was a wide moat, like the ditch at Arcot, which opened suddenly at his feet; sometimes it was a troop of elephants blocking up the great avenue; and sometimes it was a band of Mahomedan soldiers, commanded by his uncle in a snuff-coloured suit and powdered wig. He made frantic efforts to get forward, but was invariably stopped before he could reach the terrace; and he had almost given up the attempt in despair, when a voice like Monsieur de la Rochelle's whispered in his ear: "*Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra!*"—and then a little hand clasped one of his fingers, and Sakoontala led him round by the garden and up the steps, and he was just about to rush into his mother's arms—when

some one seized him by the shoulder, and shook him till he awoke.

"Get up; you lazy fellow," said Clive, "or you will be too late for the fair!"

It was broad daylight, with a confused murmur all around them, and Clive's face wore an expression of unusual joy. Nevil sprang from the couch, where he had lain down in his clothes to be ready for any emergency, and exclaimed: "What is it, Robert? Are we to have another assault?"

"Come and see," said Clive, taking him by the arm, and leading him out upon the ramparts. The inhabitants of the city were pouring into the streets, and crowding the approaches to the fortress, but not a soldier was to be found amongst them. Far away to the westward rose thick clouds of dust, through which large bodies of troops were dimly visible, showing that the enemy's forces were in full retreat. And clusters of Mahratta horsemen were pricking over the plain, as if to pursue and harass the retiring foe; while from the other side came the sound of fife and drum playing a British march, and a long, loud, ringing cheer, such as springs only from English throats, an-

nounced that Kilpatrick and Innis had arrived with the long-expected reinforcements.

Tears filled the eyes of Nevil as he wrung the hand of his friend, but the latter only remarked with a smile: "I told you the relief would come at the right moment."

The gallant soldiers, who had themselves struggled through many difficulties to bring this welcome aid to their countrymen, were struck with wonder as they entered the fortress, and saw the traces of the late desperate conflict, and how inadequate had been the resources of the defence. They made their way over heaps of smouldering rubbish, to what seemed little else than a mass of crumbling ruins, so severely had tower and battlement suffered from the siege. But there stood Clive in the midst of his devoted band, and the victor flag of England still floated from the battered wall.

BOOK VII.—TRICHINOPOLY.



CHAPTER I.

A SERIES OF EXPLOITS.

A GREAT blow had been struck, but Clive saw that he must follow it up quickly if he would save Trichinopoly, and finally defeat the plans of the French and their allies. Within five days of the raising of the siege of Arcot he was ready to take the field; and leaving Kilpatrick and a small garrison, to protect the prize he had so bravely won, he set out with a mixed body of Europeans and Sepoys, and was soon after joined by a party of Mahratta horse. His comrades during the siege were all eager to follow their valiant chief, and Nevil was proud to accompany him in the quality of his aide-de-camp.

He began by taking a petty fort called

Timery, a little to the south of Arcot, and then proceeded by forced marches in pursuit of Rajah Sahib and his fugitive host. He came up with them near the town of Arnee, whither they were hastening from Vellore to effect a junction with some French troops, and notwithstanding the great superiority of their numbers, he did not hesitate to offer them battle. He stationed his Mahrattas in a grove of palm trees to the right, his Sepoys in a village to the left, and waited with his Englishmen to receive the enemy in the open space between. They advanced along a causeway, which led across the swampy rice-fields in front, and detached their cavalry to attack the Mahrattas. Nevil, who had been sent with a message from his chief to those wild warriors, had an opportunity of studying their peculiar mode of fighting. Each horseman, skilled in the use of the sabre, was attended by a man on foot, armed with a stout club or spear in addition to his sword. If the horse was killed, the cavalier acted on foot. If the rider fell, the footman mounted the horse. And so well did they understand this singular kind of warfare that few enemies cared to encounter them on equal

terms, and on the present occasion they made five desperate charges, which were only repulsed by a heavy fire. Meanwhile, Clive had so planted his cannon as to sweep the causeway and stop the advance of the enemy in that direction, so that they were compelled to deploy, and extend their line over the rice-fields. As soon as he perceived this movement, Clive ordered his Sepoys to sally from the village on the left, and sent two platoons of Europeans to support them; at the same time he despatched two field-pieces to the assistance of the Mahrattas, and himself advanced along the causeway with his English troops and artillery. The enemy broke and fled, and although they made a stand at three different Choultries in succession, they were driven out of each of them, and forced to continue their retreat. It was then that the Mahrattas displayed their special fitness for a service in which they delighted—the pursuit and plunder of the fugitives. They hung upon the flying columns with the utmost pertinacity, captured stores, baggage, arms, ammunition, and returned with four hundred horses and Rajah Sahib's military chest. Nor were these the only results of the victory.

The Governor of Arnee consented to take the oath of allegiance to Mahomed Ali, and six hundred of the enemy's Sepoys came over and offered their services to Clive.

The attention of the English leader was next directed to Conjeveram. The sick and wounded, amongst whom were Lieutenant Revel and Ensign Glass, had been removed in litters from Arcot with the intention of conveying them to Fort St. George. Surprised on their way thither by a detachment of French soldiers, who appear to have behaved with a brutality rare amongst civilized nations, several of these unarmed and helpless invalids were slaughtered in cold blood. The rest, including the two officers, were carried as prisoners to Conjeveram, and confined in the Great Pagoda which was now occupied by the enemy.

On the approach of Clive from the scene of his late victory, the French officer in command at the Pagoda ordered Revel and Glass to write him a letter, and to inform him that, if he attempted to attack the place, the prisoners would be exposed on the wall to his fire. But the Englishmen added a postscript of their own, in which they begged that no

regard for their safety might interfere with his operations.

For the first time in the war, Nevil saw Clive really angry. "Sit down directly," he said, "and write an answer in your best French. Tell this ruffian, who calls himself one of the officers of a gallant army, and who disgraces the noble uniform he wears, that I am coming without a moment's delay; and that if he dares to put his threat into execution, I pledge him the word of a man who never yet broke his promise, I will hang him along with the murderers of my poor wounded soldiers!"

Rapid as thought, and grimly earnest in his wrath, Clive hastened to bring up his cannon, and proceeded at once to attack the Pagoda. For three whole days, he battered the walls without intermission; and although he met with a determined resistance, in which he sustained some loss, Lieutenant Bulkley being killed at his side, he succeeded in effecting a breach, and prepared for an immediate assault. But the French, losing courage at the last moment, and probably apprehensive of the just resentment they had provoked, abandoned the place during the

night, and decamped under cover of the darkness, leaving their English prisoners behind them.

After this, Clive sent part of his forces to Arcot, and part to Madras, and himself returned with Nevil to Fort St. David, to give an account of his progress. He was welcomed by his countrymen with joy and pride, and he found the Governor and Council anxious to consult him on the present state of affairs. His first question was whether they had news from Trichinopoly.

"It still holds out," said Mr. Saunders, "and your successes, my dear captain, have made an important diversion in its favour. They have put the Regent of Mysore and the Mahrattas in motion, and we hope they will induce the Rajah of Tanjore to declare for Mahomed Ali. But the fortress is hard pressed by Chunda Sahib and the French, and our people do not write in the best spirits. Now Gingen, Cope, and Dalton are good officers; but perhaps they may want a little of your——"

"Of my imprudence, your Excellency would say. I know the gentlemen you name to be brave soldiers, and I cannot doubt they have ample reasons for acting cautiously."

“Well, I hear the Mahrattas are complaining that the English at Trichinopoly are not the same men as fought at Arcot. In a word, my dear captain, we shall need your services in that quarter.”

“I shall be happy to go to the assistance of our countrymen there, with any succours your Excellency may be able to provide ; and you may be sure that as soon as they have sufficient force to meet the enemy in the field, they will show that all Englishmen are made of the same stuff.”

“I will give instant orders to have everything in readiness for the expedition ; but the preparations will take some time, and I hope you will avail yourself of it to get a little rest.”

“Oh ! a few hours will be enough for that. You may depend upon my being quite fresh and willing, whenever I am wanted.”

And, in fact, Clive could not expect much repose during his stay at Fort St. David. Every member of the colony was eager to receive and entertain the hero of Arcot, and he found himself raised to a social eminence, very different from the obscure position he had previously occupied. He bore his

honours with perfect equanimity, but there was one mark of favour that affected him much more nearly. Miss Maskelyne looked kindly upon him, and after a short delay capitulated to the victorious soldier.

“You will hardly believe it, Nevil,” he said, “but we are actually betrothed. Margaret has consented to take me, in spite of my ugly face; and after another campaign, if I can but save a trifle of prize-money, I may hope to be married to the sweetest girl on earth. I never was so frightened in my life, as when I asked her to have me.”

“I should like to see you frightened, Robert!”

“Frightened! I could feel my knees trembling under me, and my heart knocking against my ribs like our cannon-balls pounding the Great Pagoda. It is no joke, I can tell you, summoning a woman to surrender.”

“Worse than taking the Great Mogul by the beard?”

“Worse than taking the devil by his horns, Nevil! I should not be much afraid of the powers of darkness; but here, you see, I had to do with an angel!”

“Well, I hope you may always think so,

and that there will be one person in the world able to govern you and keep you out of mischief."

"Oh! I am the most tractable fellow in existence, except when I am opposed or contradicted! But when this war is over, you shall see what a peaceable life I will lead, with nothing to wish for but to make Margaret happy."

"I suppose you mean to turn shepherd, or to cultivate cabbages?"

"I will break your head, Master Nevil, if you laugh at my good intentions. But I ought to pity your ignorance, seeing that you have no Margaret to enlighten you. And there is that rascal Edmund, who makes game of his own sister, and goes on singing his everlasting nonsense about Damon and Phyllis."

"Well, I own that we ought to pay more respect to our commander. You must forgive your old friends, Clive, if they sometimes forget how great a man you have grown."

"I was not thinking of respect. I was thinking of Margaret Maskelyne, and what blockheads you must be not to value my crowning conquest. To gain the heart of

such a girl as she is, Nevil, is worth all the battles that ever were fought and won ! ”

“ To speak seriously, Robert, I am quite of your opinion. But you must not wonder if we are a little amused at the sudden change. Only a few days ago, it was all guns and gunpowder.”

“ And will be again, my boy, when we have to fight for life and honour as we had at Arcot. But I wish you were in love, Nevil, for then you would understand it all thoroughly.”

Nevil fancied he understood it already. His healthy imagination had often pictured to itself an honest and manly attachment, and he felt pretty sure that the strong, brave nature would also be the strongest in its affections. Besides, he greatly admired Miss Maskelyne, and believed that her sweet and lively temper was the very thing that was wanted to combat the sterner and gloomier humours of his friend.

So all seemed to promise well for the future, and the days passed pleasantly at Fort St. David in a youthful atmosphere of love and hope, while preparations were making for the expedition to Trichinopoly.

But, before these could be completed, news arrived that Rajah Sahib had once more taken the field, reinforced by the French from Pondicherry, and had appeared in the neighbourhood of Madras, burning villages, and plundering the country houses of the English. Mr. Saunders lost no time in sending for Clive, and consulting him as to what was best to be done.

"I certainly think," said the captain, "that we should delay the expedition, till we have put a stop to this insolence. Let me set out for Madras immediately, raise what troops I can, and go in search of these marauders. In the mean time, you will be able to continue the preparations here."

The Governor readily acceded to this proposal, and Clive astonished Nevil by suddenly bursting upon him with the intelligence. "Our holidays are over," he said, "and now you will have enough of guns and gunpowder. I suppose you mean to go with me?"

"I am the general's aide-de-camp," answered the other, "and not likely to desert on the eve of battle. When do we set out?"

"As soon as we can get on shipboard."

“But, surely, you will bid farewell to Miss Maskelyne?”

“Yes—and that is the only black part of the business. For the first time in my life, some other feeling mixes with the pleasure of action. But I shall soon get over it, when I hear the roar of cannon.”

A few hours after, the two young men were at sea, on their way to Fort St. George; and once there, in the hurry of levying troops and making ready for a march, Clive had but little leisure for tender wishes and regrets.

With aid from the garrison at Arcot, Clive was able to assemble a force of three hundred and eighty Europeans, thirteen hundred Sepoys, and six field-pieces, and with these he started in quest of an enemy greatly superior in numbers, and now provided by the French with a regular train of artillery. He followed them from place to place without succeeding in finding them, when he received intelligence that they had made an attempt to attack Arcot by surprise, being probably informed that the garrison there was much reduced. He determined, therefore, to hasten thither, and arrived on his way in sight of the town of Covrepauk.

This was a fortified station, on the road between Conjeveram and Arcot, and was chiefly remarkable for a great reservoir of water in its neighbourhood. It was evening when the English drew near the place, and the rays of the setting sun were reflected from the surface of the artificial lake, when suddenly, from a thick grove of mango trees on the right, nine pieces of cannon opened fire on the advancing troops. They were French guns worked by French gunners, and protected by a bank and ditch in their front, while at the same moment large bodies of cavalry and infantry appeared ready to dispute any further passage. Clive saw the danger of the position, but he saw also the best mode of extricating himself from it. There happened to be a water-course to the left of the road, and of this he availed himself to place his troops under shelter, and to give them time to recover from their first confusion. Then, despatching his baggage to the rear, he brought his guns to bear on the enemy in the grove, and a combat of artillery ensued which lasted for two hours. Night closed around them, and the darkness was only broken by the flashes of the cannon, till

the moon rose in her splendour, and gave them light to continue the battle. A column of French infantry charged into the water-course, and the enemy's cavalry attempted to capture the baggage, but both were repulsed with loss. Still the fire of the cannon was kept up on either side, and the superior weight of metal was gradually telling in favour of the French artillery.

"This will never do," said Clive. "We must have those guns. Who will volunteer to reconnoitre the ground?"

A sergeant named Shawlm, who spoke the native languages, at once stepped forward and offered his services. Accompanied by a few Sepoys, he crept unseen by the enemy through the intervening space, and succeeded in reaching the grove and mingling unsuspected with the outposts. Returning by a circuitous route, he reported that the rear of the grove was left unguarded, and that it would be possible to fall on it by surprise from that side.

"Who will undertake the work?" asked Clive.

"I—and I—and I!" repeated a dozen voices, and the commander looked proudly at

the ardent faces of the young officers he had formed and trained.

"You cannot all go," he said. "Some of you will be wanted to defend the water-course. Lieutenant Keene, you shall command the detachment, and I will give you two hundred Englishmen and four hundred Sepoys. Shawlm will act as guide, and you may select a fair proportion of officers. But you had better take Ensign Symmonds, for he speaks French."

"And so do I!" exclaimed Nevil, eagerly.

"Well, Brooke may go too if he likes, and I will myself accompany you part of the way. Get your men together, and be ready to start immediately."

Cautiously and in silence, Keene and his party, led by Shawlm, and favoured by a temporary obscuration of the moon, issued from their place of shelter, and wound by unfrequented paths through a thick undergrowth of vegetation, which effectually concealed their movements. Clive went with them, till he saw that they were upon the right track, and that they were gradually stealing round to the rear of the grove. Then he returned to the water-course.

He arrived only just in time. During his brief absence, the enemy had renewed the attack on the troops left behind; and the Sepoys; dispirited by the departure of their comrades, and above all by the want of their commander's presence, had begun to give way, and were on the point of dispersing in confusion. But the voice of Clive at once rallied them, the assailants were again repulsed, and the firing recommenced with unabated vigour. The force of that single will had once more changed the fortune of the fight.

Meanwhile, Keene's detachment halted about three hundred yards behind the grove, and Ensign Symmonds advanced alone to reconnoitre. He came upon a deep trench, filled with the enemy's Sepoys, who were sitting down quietly to rest, being sheltered from the random shots. They presented their muskets at him, but he answered their challenge in French, and being taken for a French officer, he was allowed to pass. Entering the deep shadow of the mango trees, he saw the men at the guns, and the guards by whom they were supported, all directing their attention to the front, and keeping no look-out towards

the rear, from which they never imagined for a moment that they had any danger to apprehend. Then he returned to his detachment, avoiding the trench and the Sepoys, and showed his companions the way by which they might reach the grove unperceived.

Swiftly, and yet noiselessly, they pressed forward to within thirty yards of the guns, and then, from the midst of the trees, poured their whole fire at once upon the gunners. Startled and confounded by the suddenness of the attack, those of the artillerymen who were not killed or wounded, made no attempt at resistance, but abandoned their ordnance, and fled with the other Frenchmen to the shelter of a neighbouring Choultry. With a loud cheer the Englishmen sprang upon their prize, and found themselves in possession of nine pieces of cannon, and three mortars. The Sepoys came rushing from the trench, but were easily scattered by a few volleys. Then the English advanced against the Choultry, where the French were so crowded together as hardly to be able to use their weapons; and the latter, seeing their artillery in the hands of the assailants, were glad to accept quarter and surrender themselves as prisoners.

It had all been the affair of a few minutes, in the shadow of the trees, and in the uncertain moonlight, and the English fighting at the water-course could only judge of the success of their countrymen by the sudden silence of the artillery. The main body of the enemy, ignorant of what had occurred, still continued the engagement, and the English in the grove could not avail themselves of the captured cannon to decide the contest, from not knowing the position of the several parties, and from fear of firing on their own friends.

"I suppose we shall have to wait here till daylight," said Keene, "unless we can communicate with Clive."

"Let me take him a message," cried Nevil, leaping down from the top of a cannon on which he was seated. "Symmonds had the honour of finding the way for us, and it is my turn to do something."

His offer was accepted, and he sped lightly over the plain in the direction of the water-course. But before he was half-way across, the battle had entered on a new phase. Convinced by the cessation of the heavy firing, that Keene was in possession of the guns,

Oliver sallied forth to charge the troops nearest to him. Almost at the same instant, the stragglers from the grove spread the news of the late disaster along the enemy's lines. Rajah Sahib's forces broke and fled, the French infantry followed their example after a short struggle, and Nevil found himself entangled in a confused mass of fugitives. Just then, the moon shone out full on the tall figure of a French officer on a white horse, a man of advanced years and noble bearing, who was making frantic efforts to rally his soldiers, and whom Nevil at once recognized as his old friend the Chevalier de Ste. Croix. Unable to arrest the flight of his countrymen, the veteran spurred his horse right against the front ranks of the pursuing Sepoys, and for a moment drove them back on those behind. But his gallant steed fell pierced by a musket-ball, he himself rolled in the dust, and although he sprang to his feet, and defended himself valiantly with his sword against a host of adversaries, it was clear that he must be overpowered by numbers.

Nevil rushed in anxious haste towards the spot; but, before he could reach his friend, he saw him sink to the earth covered with

wounds, and the Sepoys about to finish their work with the bayonet. Uttering a cry of horror, he dashed madly into the midst of them, struck aside the weapons that were pointed at the heart of the Chevalier, and bestriding the prostrate form called on them to desist. A dozen muskets were levelled at his head, and his life would have paid the penalty of his courageous interference, had not an old Sepoy, one of those who had been with him at Arcot, suddenly cried out: "Do not fire, my children! It is one of our own officers. It is Nevil Sahib."

Then the youth knelt down by the side of the fallen man, and strove to raise him in his arms. The face was deadly pale, the white hair dabbled with blood, and the life-stream was pouring from many a ghastly wound. Nevil turned imploringly to the Sepoys near him, and exclaimed: "Help me to carry him out of the fight. He is my second father."

"It is Nevil Sahib's father!" said the natives one to another in wondering whispers. Then they raised him tenderly in their arms, and bore him from the thick of the press to a place of safety. Scarfs and turbans were torn off to bandage the wounds, while a swift

runner was sent to the grove, to fetch a young French surgeon who had been taken prisoner at the Choultry.

At first, the Chevalier had stared wildly about him, and for a moment had seemed to recognize Nevil, but now he lay on the ground without sense or motion. The surgeon shook his head when he saw him, but at once applied the remedies of his art, and promised to remain with him till Nevil should return. Then, with a sick and saddened feeling, the youth ran forward to join once more in the battle.

But the fight was already over, the enemy were in full retreat, and Clive was collecting his forces on the field, to remain under arms till daybreak. He heard from Nevil the particulars of the affair at the grove, and paid a high compliment to the skill and courage with which his orders had been executed.

"It is altogether a decisive victory," he said. "But you are ill or tired out, my poor boy. You could not look worse if we had been defeated."

"I fear I have lost a dear friend," said Nevil. And then he proceeded to give an account of the wounded Chevalier.

“It is the fortune of war, you know,” answered Clive, “and a soldier cannot afford to be too sensitive. I will bear witness, however, that no danger to yourself could have shaken you in this manner. Go back to your friend, Nevil, and do all that you can for him. We shall not have much more fighting at present.”

Clive was right as usual. The morning sun rose on a field strewn with the relics of the battle, but no enemy was to be seen, and the next few days showed how complete had been the success. Covrepauk surrendered at the summons of the victors, and the English marched to Arcot, and thence half-way to Vellore, without encountering a single foe. Rajah Sahib had fled with the wreck of his army to Pondicherry, where Dupleix, in his rage and mortification, refused at first even to see him. Then Clive turned his steps towards Fort St. David, and marching across country came to the place of Nazir Jung’s defeat, where the new memorial city—the City of the Victory of Dupleix—was slowly rising from the ground, and the monument with its pompous inscription in four languages proclaimed to India the supremacy of

France. But Clive scattered both city and monument to the winds, well knowing that he should so best break the spell which Dupleix had cast over the minds of the natives, and teach them that the strong man armed had found another stronger and more formidable, who had taken away his armour, and divided his spoils.

CHAPTER II.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

SLOWLY and by easy stages, Nevil conveyed the wounded Chevalier from the field of Covrepauk to Fort St. David. As he walked with the young surgeon by the side of the litter, in the midst of a guard of Sepoys, he frequently turned anxious glances on the pale and motionless form that looked almost like a corpse, and then sought the eye of his companion, as if to ask if there were still any signs of life. From time to time the surgeon laid his finger on the wrist of the invalid, or bent down to listen at his chest, and then applied some restorative to his lips, and nodded affirmatively to Nevil. But it seemed as if the slight thread might break at any moment, and it was with no ordinary feeling of relief, that Nevil came to the end of his

journey, and found that his patient was still alive.

Withdrawing from the rejoicings of his countrymen at their late success, he devoted all his time to watch by the sick-bed of his friend, and at length had the gratification of seeing him open his eyes with a look of returning intelligence. But the surgeon could give no promise of the ultimate recovery of the invalid, and so weak and exhausted was he, that it was long before he could utter the faintest sound. Then the first word he spoke was : “ Louise ! ”

He evidently knew Nevil, for he gazed at him affectionately ; but then his eye would wander over the chamber as if in search of some other face ; and he struggled painfully to repeat with a kind of nervous agitation : “ Louise !—where is Louise ? ”

“ Whom is he asking for ? ” said the surgeon.

“ His daughter and only child.”

“ Do you know where she is ? ”

“ In the convent at Pondicherry.”

“ It would be well if we could have her here. We may expect a period of excitement and restlessness, in which her présence might

be invaluable. Do you think it would be possible to send for her?"

"Write a letter to Monsieur Dupleix, stating that she is required to nurse her father; and promise me not to leave your patient, and I will undertake to fetch her myself."

"Do you think it is quite safe for you to visit Pondicherry just now?"

"My dear doctor," said Nevil, "I have too good an opinion of your countrymen to suppose they would molest any one who came on a mission of humanity. Besides, our countries are not at war, though we may take different sides in these native quarrels. Of course I shall provide myself with a letter from our Governor."

The Frenchman offered no further objection, and Nevil at once applied to Mr. Saunders for his sanction and assistance.

"If you like to run the risk, Mr. Brooke," said the Governor, "I cannot oppose your going on such an errand. But you must remember the treatment of our wounded officers at Conjeveram."

"I think, sir, we ought to distinguish between the act of a single ruffian and the general conduct of a gallant nation."

“Certainly—and I have no wish to be unjust—only, it is hard to forget who broke the treaty of Madras. However, you shall have such safe conduct as I can give you; and I will take this opportunity of communicating with Monsieur Dupleix on the subject of a cartel for the exchange of prisoners. They have some of our men from Trichinopoly, and we have a good many of theirs from Covrepauk.”

Nevil was soon upon the road to Pondicherry, along with a French officer, whom Mr. Saunders had deputed to accompany him, and they arrived without accident at the end of their journey. Having shown their credentials, they were admitted after some little delay to the presence of Monsieur Dupleix, who received them in no very agreeable mood.

“I do not know, sir,” he said, turning to the Frenchman, “whether you have come to report your feats of arms, or whether you have brought this young Englishman to tell the story for you. In either case, the task is somewhat superfluous.”

“I have no such intention, sir,” answered the officer. “Your Excellency will no doubt

have received full reports as to military affairs from my superiors. I have simply come to attend this gentleman on a peaceful mission, and to deliver into your hands this letter from the English Governor of Fort St. David."

Dupleix broke the seal impatiently. "Exchange of prisoners!" he said. "What right has a country, which purports to be at peace with France, to detain a single Frenchman as a prisoner? And what can you urge, sir," he added, turning to Nevil, "in justification of acts of violence which savour of brigandage?"

"It would ill become me, sir," replied Nevil, "to argue with your Excellency the justice or expediency of this contest, or by whom it was first begun. I presume, that both Frenchmen and Englishmen are acting as allies to native princes in a native quarrel. But the war exists, battles have been fought, and prisoners made; and it is in the interest of humanity that we propose an exchange."

"Humanity! the favourite pretext of hypocritical egotism. Have you any other reason to induce us to accept your offer?"

"I would merely suggest to your Excellency, that it might be more for your

interest than ours. The balance of prisoners is not in your favour."

Dupleix looked sharply at the speaker, but there was a quiet resolution about him which commanded respect and attention. The Governor condescended to enter into details, and finished by listening to his proposals.

"And now," said Dupleix, "what is this other matter? A message from the Chevalier de Ste. Croix?"

"He lies dangerously wounded at Fort St. David, and requires the immediate presence of his daughter."

"Have you no letter from him?"

"He is unable to write—scarcely able to speak—but here is a certificate from the French surgeon who attends him."

"And how is the young lady to travel?"

"With your Excellency's permission, I will undertake to conduct her to her father."

"You are young for such a charge. What security have I, that you will deliver up your trust in safety?"

"The honour of an English gentleman," answered Nevil proudly.

"Well—there can be no doubt that you are commissioned by the Governor of Fort

St. David, and that this certificate is signed by the medical attendant of my friend the Chevalier. You shall have a note for the Lady Superior of the convent, and I will provide palanquins and a guard for the journey."

"I am greatly obliged to your Excellency. You will perhaps also favour me with a written reply to the letter of our Governor."

When Nevil reached the nunnery, and sent in the note from Monsieur Dupleix, he was at once admitted to the parlour, and received by the Lady Superior.

"I am sorry to find, sir," she said, "that you bring bad news to one of my cherished pupils, and that I am likely to lose her. When is it requisite that she should join her father?"

"Immediately, madam. In the present critical state of the Chevalier, every minute is precious."

"Go and fetch the Demoiselle de Ste. Croix, Ursule," said the lady to one of the lay sisters, "and tell her, by the way, that her father has sent her a message by this young English gentleman. We must not take the poor child by surprise."

While Nevil waited for the coming of Louise, his memory travelled back to former scenes, and his imagination conjured up the small fairy figure in its rich Indian garb, with all its fantastic and picturesque surroundings. It was therefore almost with a start of astonishment, that he saw a young lady enter the apartment, slight and graceful indeed as ever, but grown to womanhood, and attired in a plain white dress, with no ornament but a string of beads and a cross. He had forgotten that five years had elapsed since he first met the little Sakootala, and three since he parted from her. The bud had blossomed into the flower beneath the sun of the tropics, and the sweet child of ten was now a beautiful girl of fifteen.

She advanced to greet the stranger with becoming modesty, but stopped suddenly as she recognized Nevil, and scarcely suppressed the cry that rose to her lips. Then recovering herself, although with a deep blush, she curtsied to him in the maidenly fashion of the day, and addressed him in the well-known voice.

"I did not know it was you, Monsieur Nevil," she said, "and indeed I am very

glad to see you again—but what news do you bring me of my dear father?”

Nevil, who had almost expected to feel a child's arms about his neck, and a child's kisses on his cheek, was somewhat staggered at this reception. He returned her salutation, however, with a respectful bow, and hastened to break to her, as delicately as possible, the news he had to communicate.

“Wounded! very ill! perhaps, in danger!” she exclaimed, as she gathered the truth from his explanations. “Oh, my poor papa! I must go to him instantly—instantly! You will let me go, will you not, dear mother?”

“Certainly, my child,” said the Lady Superior, “since your father sends for you, and the Governor approves. But you must have a female companion.”

“Oh, my good old Ayah will go with me, and Monsieur Nevil will take care of us both!”

“You seem to be well acquainted,” said the lady with a smile; “but this gentleman carries his passport in his face, and I should not be afraid to trust him. It is a sacred charge, sir, which we commit to your keeping.”

"So sacred, madam, that I will answer for it with my life."

The preparations were soon made; but with the palanquins and soldiers came Madame Dupleix, to bid farewell, as she said, to her young friend. Unlike the good nun, this lady affected extreme reluctance at confiding Louise to the care of Nevil. "A very light, dissipated person, this Monsieur Broc!" she whispered. "Not at all fit to be the guardian of a young girl. But I have brought my husband's nephew, Monsieur Kirjean, to take the command of the escort, and see that nothing happens on the road to furnish food for scandal. Adieu, my dear little Louise, adieu! Commend me to your excellent father. My heart will ache for you in the midst of those horrid English. Be sure to preserve your French innocence from the wiles of those barbarians. The good mother will tell you, that they are all heretics and reprobates!"

"Heaven watches over truth and purity, there as here," was all that the Lady Superior said; but she looked as if she did not quite believe in the vehement zeal of Madame Dupleix. She was an intelligent woman, and

had seen something of the world before she became a nun.

Jan Begum next went out into the street, where she had left her splendid palanquin, and addressed herself to the gentlemen who were waiting in front of the convent. "Ha, ha, Monsieur Broc! so you have come to carry off one of our French beauties. But let me give you a word of advice. She is not for you, and I would not have you indulge in vain hopes. And you, my nephew—will you explain to Monsieur Broc, that a French young lady of distinction is not to be familiarly approached by every one!"

"Really, madam," said Nevil, "I do not know why you should talk to me in this strain of Mademoiselle de Ste. Croix. I have given no one the right to do so. My only business with that young lady is to conduct her safely to her father—a task which I mean to perform—and in performing it I will suffer no disrespect to be offered to her name."

He glanced significantly at the French officer as he spoke, and the latter, growing very red, seemed to be chafing under some fancied indignity. But the Begum only

laughed as she flung herself back in her palanquin, satisfied with the mischief she had caused in mere spite and wantonness.

“Adieu, gentlemen,” she said, kissing her hand to them, “and be sure that you do not quarrel before you get to Fort St. David!”

Monsieur Kirjean was a young, handsome man, vain of his person, vain of his dress and accomplishments, who had seen some military service under Bussy in the northern provinces, and was also not unaccustomed to conquests over female hearts. He had met Mademoiselle de Ste. Croix on one or two occasions, when Madame Duplex had brought her for a visit to the palace, as the Governor’s residence was now called, and he flattered himself that his many attractions had not been lost on the simple pupil of the convent. He had even begun to entertain more serious intentions with regard to her, and his aunt, who knew that it was her husband’s object to secure the support and alliance of the Chevalier, had encouraged these views on the part of her nephew. It was therefore with great disgust, that he heard the malicious hint of the existence of a possible rival.

When Louise and her Ayah appeared, all ready for the journey, Monsieur Kirjean stepped forward to offer his services, and the young lady allowed him to lead her to her palanquin. But she signed to Nevil to take care of her nurse, and there was something more friendly in that familiar gesture, than in her acknowledgment of the Frenchman's politeness.

"I hope, mademoiselle," said Kirjean, "that you will command us in all things, taking your own time, and stopping wherever you please by the way."

"On the contrary, Monsieur Kirjean," replied Louise. "The only thing I have to ask is to get on as fast as possible. I do not want a moment's rest until I have seen my father."

There was nothing more to be said—so the escort mounted their horses, and the bearers started at full speed with the palanquins. The two young men rode on for some time in silence, each occupied with his own reflections, and Nevil communed with himself on the strange remarks of the Begum.

"What could have put it into that woman's head to talk such unprovoked and impertinent

nonsense? My poor little Sakoontala! Heaven knows I have never thought of her but as the daughter of my friend, and my only wish has been to restore the dear child to her father. But what a lovely girl she has grown! How like, and yet how unlike her former self! The same eyes, the same hair, the same delicate features—but with some new and exquisite charm, which I am quite unable to describe. I wonder if she remembers our old intimacy, and how we used to play together like brother and sister. It seems to me a long time ago, and as if we were now almost strangers to each other. I have lost my little fairy, who has been transformed into something more dazzlingly beautiful, and I fear I shall never find her again.”

While he thus mused, the silence, always oppressive to a French nature, became intolerable to Monsieur Kirjean. He moved uneasily on his saddle, pulled with his daintily gloved hands nervously at the reins, and made his horse curvet in a kind of angry impatience. Then, twisting his moustache, he turned suddenly to Nevil, and addressed him on the first topic that chanced at the moment to occur to him.

"I think, sir, you brought a French officer with you to Pondicherry?"

"I did so—and I have left him with Monsieur Dupleix, to complete some arrangement about the exchange of prisoners."

"And by what right, sir, do your people hold in custody the subjects of the King of France?"

"By the same right, I suppose, that your soldiers capture the subjects of the King of England. I can really see no difference."

"Pardon me—there is a marked difference between you and us. France is the great civilizing power, which is welcomed everywhere by princes and people. You are the interlopers, who seek by intrigue and violence to cross our benevolent designs."

"I think," said Nevil, smiling, "that we both came to India to buy and sell like other merchants. It is your Monsieur Dupleix that has turned us all into soldiers. But I had rather not discuss the merits of our several nations. It is enough for me, that I have dear friends amongst your countrymen."

"And amongst our countrywomen too, perhaps," said Kirjean, with a slight sneer.

"If it were so," replied Nevil, "I should

not consider it necessary to talk of it to strangers."

"Oh, you need not talk of it!" said Kirjean with a provoking laugh. "I have been informed on good authority, that your taste is excellent, and that you aspire to no common beauty. I would only warn you that the pursuit may be dangerous."

"Monsieur Kirjean," responded Nevil, looking him full in the face, "you are either labouring under some strange delusion, or you are trying to fasten a quarrel upon me. In either case, you will please remember, that we are upon duty, and joined together in a commission of trust. You will therefore excuse me, if I decline any personal altercation till a more fitting opportunity."

He bowed gravely as he spoke, and rode away to a little distance from his fellow-traveller. The Frenchmen bit his lips, and muttered an oath; but he felt that he could hardly continue the conversation at present, and that he had no sufficient pretext to offer any more open insult to his fancied rival.

They reached Fort St. David without further incident. Nevil had studiously confined his intercourse with Louise to a

few ordinary attentions, and although Kirjean had several times approached her palanquin with compliments and fine speeches, she had always contrived to avoid any lengthened response to his civilities. In fact, her mind was so occupied with thoughts of her father, that she paid little heed to anything else, and was only anxious to arrive at the end of her journey.

Clive met them at the gates, and informed Nevil that the *Chévalier* was still in a very precarious state. Then, seeing Kirjean and the soldiers, he added that they could not be admitted to the fortress, but that refreshments should be supplied for the men, and provender for their horses, and that they might find rest and shelter at one of the neighbouring *Choultries*.

When Nevil explained this to Kirjean, the Frenchman burst into a torrent of indignant expostulation and remonstrance. He had never, he said, been treated with so little courtesy, and he made many sarcastic allusions to the English generally, and to Nevil in particular, insinuating that the latter had instigated a breach of hospitality for private reasons of his own.

"What is all that noise about?" asked Clive.

"He complains of what he calls our incivility, and he is trying, I think, to force me to quarrel with him."

"Tell him that you cannot oblige him just now, being otherwise engaged. Say that you have my orders—Captain Clive's orders—to report yourself instantly to the Governor. Every officer must know it is entirely at our discretion, to admit strangers to a fortified place; and I should advise this gentleman to return with his soldiers to Pondicherry, with as little delay as possible."

The Frenchman seemed inclined to continue the controversy, but he saw from Clive's manner that all further discussion would be useless.

"I shall meet you and your captain again, sir," said Kirjean, jingling his spurs and rattling his sabre, "when I hope you will be at more leisure to defend your honour."

"We shall probably meet on the field of battle, sir," answered Nevil, "and there you will find us ready to give you full satisfaction."

"*Morbleu!*" cried the Frenchman, mount-

ing his horse. "These Englishmen have no souls!"

"I could not let that fellow in," said Clive to Nevil, as they entered the fortress together, "to see what we were doing, and report to his chiefs. Our expedition is just ready to start for Trichinopoly, and in a few hours we shall be on the road. But I do not take the command this time."

"Not take the command!"

"No. My old friend Major Lawrence has arrived from England. He is my superior officer, and I shall be proud to serve under him."

"But will the troops have the same confidence in his leadership?"

"We must set them an example of military duty and obedience, Nevil. Besides, he is a brave man and a good soldier, and I have great obligations to him. He was the first who brought me forward."

After a brief interview with the Governor, Nevil hastened to the chamber of his wounded friend. There he found the Chevalier still stretched weak and helpless on his bed, but with the light of joy in his eyes, for they were fixed on the graceful figure that was kneeling by his pillow, and on the sweet

face that bent tenderly over him, and covered his poor trembling hand with kisses. The old Ayah was standing behind her mistress, and from the other side of the couch the young surgeon gazed silently on the scene. Nevil paused, as if he almost feared to intrude upon a sacred privacy. But the Chevalier knew him, and beckoned him feebly to approach. Then, with a long sigh of gratitude, he made an effort to speak. "Thanks, dear friend!" he murmured. "You saved my life—and now you have given me my child."

Louise raised her head to look at Nevil, and her eyes were swimming with delicious tears.

"I must forbid all emotion," said the surgeon, smiling. "If mademoiselle is to make a good hospital nurse, she must be as quiet and composed as a nun. And as for you, Monsieur le Chevalier, you are not to talk at present."

Meanwhile, the Ayah set herself practically to work, to arrange little matters in the chamber, and make all straight and comfortable. "You know the old woman, Nevil Sahib," she said, "who nursed you like one little infant, when you sick at Pondicherry?"

"I know that you are the best of nurses, mother. But you must let your young lady help you, or she will be jealous. And you must both promise to obey the doctor in all things."

"Are you going to leave us, Nevil Sahib?"

"I am afraid I cannot remain with you any longer—I am called away on duty—but I shall go with a much happier mind, now that I know the father and daughter are together. God grant, when I return, I may find you all safe and well!"

Louise had heard these last words, and rising very softly from her knees, so as not to disturb her father, she went up to Nevil, and took him by the hand.

"God bless you, wherever you go, Monsieur Nevil!" she said. "You have done for us such a service as nothing can ever repay."

"Only think of me kindly in my absence," he replied, "and let me see your father on his feet again, and I shall be repaid a thousandfold."

CHAPTER III.

THE NIGHT OF SURPRISES.

“How have you left your friend, Nevil?” asked Clive, as they made their final preparations for starting on their new enterprise.

“Still very ill, but I hope with a fair chance of recovery. His daughter is with him, and I am anxious that she should meet with care and kindness, whatever happens.”

“I will speak to Margaret about her, and you may be sure it will be all right. Margaret will be like a sister to her.”

“I shall be greatly indebted to Miss Maskeyne. You know, Clive, when I was nearly dying at Pondicherry, these people were my good angels.”

“Yes, I know—and I must say the girl herself looks a charming little creature. You are a sly fellow, Master Nevil, but I should

not be astonished if you took a more tender interest in her."

"What! you too, Brutus! It is hard that one cannot be kind to a sweet child like that, without being accused of interested motives. You are quite mistaken, however. I have never thought of her but as a little, delicate fairy."

Yet afterwards, when Nevil was left to himself on the long march, or in the silent watches of the night, he often caught himself thinking of Louise, as something dearer and more human than ever came from fairyland. The marvellous change which had taken place in the French girl, affected his feelings towards her in a manner he scarcely understood. She was no longer the Indian Sakoon-tala, the bright, ethereal spirit of a poet's dream—no longer even the pretty playfellow, who had cheered his hours of lassitude with the sportive sallies of a child—but might not the higher and holier picture of a pure, Christian maiden, kneeling by the sick-bed of a beloved father, take as strong a hold on the imagination, and grow much nearer to the heart?

The few days that followed the departure

of the expedition from Fort St. David were full of bustle and activity. Major Lawrence was desirous to reach Trichinopoly without fighting; and the enemy, as soon as they knew he was in the field, were equally anxious to prevent his doing so. Hence much marching and counter-marching beneath a broiling sun, and various manœuvres ending in a combat of artillery. But after a fierce cannonade, in which Clive distinguished himself as usual by his skill and courage, the enemy were driven from their positions, and the English arrived at Trichinopoly in spite of every obstacle.

About five miles to the north-west of the city, the river Cavary divides itself into two arms, of which the northern is called the Coleroon, and between these lies the island of Seringham. Here had stood from of old a Great Pagoda, one of the most celebrated of all the Indian temples, dedicated to Vishnu, and said to contain the most sacred image of the god. It was composed of seven quadrangles, one within the other, each having four gates and four high towers, and the outward wall was four miles in circumference. Thousands of Brahmins resided in or near it,

and multitudes came to it on pilgrimages from all parts of Hindostan. It had always been held as a place of peculiar sanctity, and the reverence of the people had hitherto protected it from pollution.

It was to this Pagoda of Seringham that Chunda Sahib retired with his forces, on the arrival of Major Lawrence at Trichinopoly, and his subsequent operations on the banks of the Cavary; and at the same time Monsieur Law, who commanded the French contingent, fell back on another Pagoda called Jumbakistna, situated on the same island. Mahomed Ali, reinforced by his English allies, and supported by a mixed body of Mahrattas, Mysoreans, and Tanjorines, appeared now to be pretty safe in his city of Trichinopoly, and it was at first difficult to explain what were the intentions of the enemy, in remaining encamped between the two rivers.

It was soon obvious, however, that their object was to compel the defenders of Trichinopoly to keep a large force in the field, and so to exhaust the patience and the resources of the confederates. They hoped, also, to detach a portion of the natives from the cause of Mahomed Ali, and with this view

Monsieur Dupleix and his indefatigable wife were already engaged in secret intrigues, and Chunda Sahib had more than once opened communications with Morari Row. Major Lawrence saw, that by this policy the war might be indefinitely prolonged, and that he was exposed at any time to a reverse through the desertion or treachery of his allies.

"I should like to know," he said one day to Clive, "what you would do in my place. Speak freely, and without the slightest reserve."

"Well, major, it is impossible to remain as we are. We cannot afford to play the waiting game. Our forces will gradually melt away, and we shall be left in a worse plight than ever. We should strike quickly, and strike hard."

"But how is it to be done?"

"If I had my will, I would divide our forces into two bodies, detach one of them to the northern side of the Coleroon, and retain the other on the southern bank of the Cavary. The enemy would thus be placed between two fires, and surrounded and besieged in their turn. They must either come out and fight us, or remain shut up in their island, cut off from all their supplies."

"It is like one of your plans, Clive. But suppose they were to concentrate their strength upon one point at a time, fall upon each of our divisions in succession, and attack and defeat us in detail?"

"Why, then we should lose the game, major. But I doubt whether they know how to play it; and even if they did, I think we could keep them at bay with half our numbers. It is a case in which we must risk something to gain all."

"I am inclined to adopt your advice, but it cannot be done without the aid of the Mahrattas and Mysoreans. We shall have to consult them before we can act, and then there is another difficulty. I should like you, my dear Clive, to take the command of the detached forces; but you know there are senior officers in the camp, and there may be jealousies."

"Whether first or last, I shall be ready for duty, major. Whoever takes the command shall have the best services I can give him."

The difficulty, however, did not occur in practice. Captain Dalton and the others expressed their willingness to yield precedence to the hero of Arcot; and the natives

settled the question by declaring that they would follow no leader but Sabut Jung—*steadfast in war*—the title bestowed on Clive by Mahomed Ali.

It was on the night of the 6th April, 1752, that Clive set out on this new expedition, with about four hundred Europeans, and a mixed force of Sepoys, Mahrattas, and Tanjorines. They crossed the Cavary, traversed the island of Seringham to the eastward of Jumbakistna, and passed the Coleroon before morning, without being discovered by the enemy, or at all events without meeting with any resistance. Then, still marching northward, they took possession of the village of Samiavaram, where two Pagodas overlooked the road leading to Pondicherry, and enabled them to intercept all supplies and reinforcements coming from that quarter.

“ We have our hands on their throats now, Nevil,” said Clive, “ if we can but maintain ourselves in this place. But, in order to do so, we must set to work at once to strengthen our position.”

So ravelins were thrown up, and redoubts constructed, to command the road in both directions, and the little army was soon

established in a fortified camp. Then, by a fortunate sally, the English Sepoys captured one of the enemy's magazines, and found in it sufficient grain to supply ten thousand men for two months.

Clive had been at Samiavaram nearly a week, when he received intelligence that Monsieur D'Auteuil was on his way from Pondicherry, sent by Dupleix to relieve Seringham, and to supersede Monsieur Law in the command. Fearing the Frenchman might succeed in his object by taking a circuitous route, Clive marched with the greater part of his forces to meet him ; but D'Auteuil avoided an engagement, and retreated to the Fort of Utatoor, on which the English returned in all haste to their camp. Now it happened, that Law, at Seringham, got news of Clive's departure but not of his return, and believing Samiavaram to be very feebly garrisoned, he determined to risk a night attack upon it, and despatched a body of troops for that purpose, including some English deserters who had lately joined his flag.

It was in the dead of night, and Clive was sleeping soundly after the fatigues of the day,

in a Choultry at a little distance from the smaller Pagoda, when Nevil, whom the heat of the weather had rendered wakeful, strolled out into the darkness, and stood talking with some of the guard. Suddenly, he heard footsteps and voices, as if an approaching party was challenged by the sentinels at the outposts, and then, having satisfied them, was allowed to pass. Much surprised at this, he stepped forward to ascertain who the newcomers might be, and was at once aware that he was close upon a large body of soldiers.

"Who goes there?" he said, retaining his presence of mind, and giving no sign of astonishment.

"Shure and it's your own countrymen, honey!" replied a voice with a strong Irish accent; "and it's from Major Lawrence we're come with reinforcements—and it's the way to head-quarters we're looking for, jist to report ourselves to Captain Clive."

"This way, gentlemen," cried Nevil, endeavouring to lead them in the opposite direction to the Choultry, and plunging into the darkness to escape falling into their hands.

"The divil's desaiving us intirely," said the Irishman, when they had advanced a few

paces, "and he'll be after giving the alarm. We must show our true colours, boys!"

Just then, a loud shout from Nevil called on the sentinels to discharge their pieces. A ball whistled after him through the air, but it did not touch him, and he was already at some distance from the enemy, whose real character he had at once detected. They were marching, however, between him and the Choultry, and perceiving it was impossible to go to Clive's assistance, he felt sure that the best thing he could do was to rouse the Mahrattas, and to spread the alarm through all the slumbering camp.

As he rushed onward with this intention, stumbling in the gloom and uncertainty of the way, he heard the sound of firing behind him, and saw by the frequent flashes that the work of slaughter had begun. The enemy, turning round from the place where he left them, had come upon the Choultry and the smaller Pagoda, had shot down the sentries, and poured their volleys into both buildings. Clive, startled from his sleep, by a discharge which shattered the box that lay under his feet, and killed the native servant who was resting near him, sprang up from his couch

and out of the Choultry in a moment. His first notion was, that the firing came from his own Sepoys, alarmed by some attack on the outposts, and letting off their muskets at random; but fortunately he did not pause to inquire, when the least delay would have been fatal, but ran straight to the larger Pagoda, where he knew he should find his English troops. These had flown to their arms on hearing the noise, and now, as they recognized the voice of their commander, two hundred of them hastened to follow him back to the Choultry. Here they found a body of men firing in all directions, and as Clive could not conceive it possible that the enemy had penetrated thus far into his camp, he was confirmed in his former supposition that these must be some of his own Sepoys. Under this impression, he advanced alone into the midst of them, ordering them peremptorily to cease firing, upbraiding them with their cowardly panic, and even striking some who refused to listen to him. Many of them, being ignorant both of French and English, did not at first comprehend that he was not one of their own officers; till at length a French Sepoy discovered that he was an Englishman, and at

once attacked and wounded him in two places with his sword.

Clive closed with the man and disarmed him, and exasperated at the insolence of one whom he believed to be a mutineer, he followed him in his flight to the gates of the smaller Pagoda. Here he was suddenly confronted by six Frenchmen, and the truth at once dawned upon him that he was in the midst of the enemy's forces. But his coolness did not fail him; and he told them with perfect composure that the Pagoda was surrounded by his troops, and that he had come to offer them terms of surrender. The Frenchmen understood what he said, and were so impressed with the firmness of his manner, that three of them laid down their arms, and three of them ran into the Pagoda to carry the intelligence. Then Clive returned to his soldiers, intending to attack the French Sepoys at the Choultry. But these had already moved away, and the English had allowed them to do so, supposing that they were only acting in obedience to Clive's orders. And in all this hurry and confusion some prisoners were actually taken by the English, and then sent to the smaller Pagoda for safe custody, in

ignorance that the building was in the possession of the French.

Though faint and bleeding from his wounds, Clive now advanced to the assault of this Pagoda, resolved to carry it by storm before any more of the enemy, who must he thought be near at hand, could arrive to occupy it. But the entrance was narrow, the English or Irish deserters fought with the courage of desperation, and the assailants, after suffering some loss, were compelled to wait for daylight. All this time indescribable noises resounded through the camp, and none could tell if they came from friends or foes. It was only at break of day that Nevil was at length able to make his way to Clive, and report to him that the shouts and tumult proceeded from the Mahrattas and Tanjorines, who had refused to move in the darkness, but as soon as they could see would hasten to the assistance of their allies. He added, that he had fully expected to fall in with some of the enemy; but that, with the exception of the troops in the Pagoda, they appeared to have left the camp as secretly as they had entered it.

Meanwhile, the combat recommenced. The

French attempted a sally, but were driven back in their turn with loss; and Clive, wishing to stop the effusion of blood, made signs to invite them to a parley. The firing ceased, and he approached the gates of the Pagoda, leaning from exhaustion on the shoulders of two sergeants, and resting his back against the wall of the porch to speak. He was about to address the French officer, and Nevil had followed to act as interpreter if required, when the Irish leader of the deserters, anxious to prevent a surrender, rushed forward with a torrent of abuse, and fired his musket at Clive. By an extraordinary fortune, the ball missed him, but passed through the bodies of both the sergeants, who fell dead on either side of him. Nevil instantly cut down the deserter, and the English soldiers advanced in hot haste to rescue or avenge their commander; but the Frenchmen, feeling that such an outrage would deprive them of all right to quarter, thought it best to offer no further resistance, and agreed to surrender at discretion.

And now, while the English resumed possession of the Pagoda, and the Mahratta horsemen set out in pursuit of the other

division of the enemy, Clive yielded at last to physical pain and weakness, and consented to take a little rest, and to have his wounds attended to. In all his adventurous career, he was never in more imminent danger than on that night of strange mistakes and surprises, and never had his cool, invincible courage been more conspicuously displayed. But now a grim smile relaxed the stern expression of his features, and he muttered as Nevil led him half fainting to his couch :

“They caught us napping this time, but I think we have taught them to let sleeping dogs lie !”

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATE OF CHUNDA SAHIB.

AFTER the night-assault at Samiavaram, events followed each other in quick succession. Major Lawrence despatched Captain Dalton to Clive's assistance, and D'Auteuil was forced to evacuate Utatoor, and abandon the supplies he was bringing to Seringham. In a few days, notwithstanding his wounds, Clive was again in the field, and captured a French post to the north of the Coleroon. The waters of that river were now so swollen by the rains as to have become impassable, and Clive took advantage of the opportunity to erect a battery on a high mound which commanded the opposite bank, where the enemy lay encamped near the Great Pagoda on the island.

When this battery opened fire, the effect

was greater than could have been anticipated. The shot told directly on the centre of the camp, which, as usual with Indian armies, contained vast numbers of women, children, and servants, and united all the characteristics of a fair and market. When the smoke cleared off from the first discharge of cannon, Nevil, who was standing on the mound, was astonished at the sight of the strange scene that was passing on the other side of the river. A crowd of fugitives came flocking from all parts of the camp, and spread themselves over the adjacent country. Men, women, and children, merchants and pedlars, musicians, dancing-girls, and camp-followers of every kind, with elephants, camels, horses, and bullocks, were all huddled together in headlong flight across the plain. The young Englishman was touched with pity, as he watched the terrors of this helpless throng, and he could not keep himself from asking Clive, if the firing was to be continued.

“They are more frightened than hurt,” answered the imperturbable captain, “and you will see that this panic will have the most excellent results. It will do more than another battle to break up the confederacy.”

Clive was again right in his predictions. The multitude fled across the island to the banks of the Cavary, in the direction of Trichinopoly ; but here Major Lawrence assailed them from his batteries, and they were forced to retire in confusion to a safe distance from either river. It was soon clear, that the plan of the daring soldier had succeeded, and that Chunda Sahib's army, isolated between the two streams, cut off from its supplies, and disturbed in all its habits by the flight of its followers and attendants, was fast becoming disorganized. The various chiefs informed the unfortunate Nabob of their choice that they could no longer support him, and began to treat with the English and their allies for a free passage to their several homes. The rapacious Mahrattas were for granting no terms, persuaded that, if matters were driven to extremity, they could win with their sabres the largest share of the booty. But both Lawrence and Clive resisted this cruel policy, and declared that, if the others refused, they would themselves grant a safe conduct through the English lines.

The Mahrattas were compelled unwillingly to yield, an agreement was made for the

withdrawal of the confederate troops, and flags were planted along the rivers as a signal for them to pass over. Then followed the strange scene of the general break-up of an army. Some departed for their own countries, some joined the Mysoreans, a few went over to Mahomed Ali, but fifteen hundred Sepoys and two thousand of the best cavalry came and offered their services to Captain Clive. Deserted by all but some two thousand horse and three thousand foot, Chunda Sahib took refuge in the Great Pagoda of Seringham, while Monsieur Law and his Frenchmen shut themselves up in Jumbakistna.

Major Lawrence at once crossed to the island, and Clive, starting in pursuit of D'Auteuil, who was still hovering about in the hope of relieving his countrymen, came up with him near Volcondah, attacked, defeated, and forced him to capitulate. It was settled that the French were to lay down their arms, the private soldiers to remain prisoners of war, the officers to be released on parole, and stores, munitions, and money to become the prize of the victors. After this exploit, Clive returned to his former station,

and from his camp on the banks of the Coleroon despatched Nevil to Major Lawrence, to give an account of the late transactions and to wait for further orders.

Arrived in safety at the English camp on the Cavary, Nevil was warmly received by the major, who highly praised the conduct of Clive and his detachment.

"I cannot sufficiently express my obligations to your captain," said the gallant commander, whose noble nature was free from every taint of jealousy. "We owe almost all our success to him. And I am very glad to have you with me just now, Mr. Brooke. Your knowledge of languages will be most useful in dealing both with our enemies and our allies. To speak plainly, the latter seem to me a precious set of rascals."

"Have you discovered anything new, major?"

"I believe that they are all intriguing one against the other. I know that Morari Row has been in communication with Duplex, and I have little doubt that, if your detachment had been cut off at Samiavaram, the Mahrattas would have gone over to the other side. But I have also certain information, that Mahrattas,

Mysoreans, and Tanjorines are all plotting to get possession of Trichinopoly, and to leave poor Mahomed Ali out in the cold. Then each of them is anxious to lay hold of Chunda Sahib, in order to play him off against the rest. Now I should like you to carry a message to Monackjee, the general of the Tanjorines, who is encamped not far from here, and see if you can make out what is going on."

"I will do my best, major; but I fear I am no match for the craft of these slippery gentlemen."

"I should be sorry if you were like them, my young friend. But honesty is often as good a weapon as cunning, and at all events you will keep your eyes and ears open. The message you are to take is, that I have summoned Monsieur Law to surrender—that, if he does not comply, it is my intention to attack Jumbakistna—and that I wish to know what assistance I am to expect from the Tanjorines."

When Nevil arrived at Chukly-Pollam, a village on the Cavary where the Tanjorines were encamped, and delivered his message from Major Lawrence, he was welcomed by Monackjee with a mixture of civility and em-

barrassment. The Tanjorine seemed chiefly anxious to get rid of him, and to send him back to the major with vague assurances of devotion and promises of support. But Nevil declared that he must have a more definite answer, and that he would wait till the next day to enter into full particulars. Then Monackjee smiled graciously upon him—though Nevil fancied it was a false and cruel smile—and gave orders for his lodging and entertainment, but excused himself from keeping him company, on the plea of pressing business. The Englishman was conducted to a tent, where everything was prepared for the reception of a guest, and where he soon observed that he was closely watched and guarded; and when, having partaken of some refreshment, he essayed to walk out in the evening for a stroll through the camp, he was politely informed that none could quit their tents after sunset, without the express permission of the general.

“I did not know that I was a prisoner,” he said good-naturedly to the officer on guard, “but of course you must follow your instructions.”

“There is no choice, sahib,” answered the

man, "but you need not fear that any harm will happen to you."

"Oh! I have no fear," said Nevil, laughing. "I am an Englishman, and in the camp of an ally."

He turned back into the tent, whistling carelessly an old English air. Then he asked for a light, drew a small volume from his pocket, and began to read. It was the "Horace," which his schoolmaster in Warwickshire had given him years before. He had enough scholarship to relish the wit and wisdom of the Latin poet, and the soldiers, who looked in at him from time to time, saw that he was absorbed in his occupation. At length, when it was already late, he lay down upon the couch prepared for him, and slept, or appeared to sleep.

The night was far advanced, and the camp was wrapped in silence and darkness, when Nevil rose cautiously from his couch, and advanced on tip-toe to the entrance of the tent. He felt convinced that some mischief was plotting, and he was resolved to detect it if possible. The guards, who had satisfied themselves of the submission or indifference of the young English stranger, were sleeping

soundly at their several posts, and he had no difficulty in creeping out from amongst them, picking up an Indian cloak by the way, and throwing it over his English uniform. He was for some time at a loss how to proceed further, but he was attracted by a solitary light in the distance, and followed its guidance to a pavilion placed in the centre of the camp. Here some horses and grooms were waiting, and he could hear the men conversing together in French. Taking care not to be discovered by them, he stood watching in the neighbouring gloom, when suddenly the curtain in front of the pavilion was drawn aside, and a full glare of light fell on the figures of two persons who came from within. One of them was a French officer; the other was Monackjee.

"I have, then, your word," said the Frenchman, "that, if he delivers himself up to you, his person will be safe and sacred, and that you will protect him in his passage to one of our settlements?"

"Have I not told you?" answered the Tanjorine. "The palanquins are ready, and a squadron of horse. He will be as safe as my own brother."

"I do not know if brothers are always safe in this country. Cannot you give some hostages?"

"Hostages are useless. If I wanted to kill him, what should I care for hostages? My only wish is, that he should not fall into the hands of any of the others. None of them shall have him—neither Nabob, nor Mahratta, nor Mysorean, nor Feringhee. I will preserve him from them all."

"Well, your highness knows your own policy best. But we are bound in honour to see that no mischief comes to our ally. It would perhaps be better that he should surrender to the English."

"No, no," said Monackjee; "not to the Feringhees. They have too much power already, and they would use him for their own purposes. Did he not tell you himself, that he would rather trust to me?"

"It is for that reason I am here—but we ought to have some security. Your highness must not suppose that we are unable to protect our friends."

"Can you protect yourselves?" said the Tanjorine, sarcastically. "But that is not the question—we are talking of Chunda

Sahib. It is your interest, and my interest also, that he should not fall into the hands of any of these people. We want to keep him for another occasion. Besides, I have given my promise to Jan Begum."

"But I still ask for some security."

"You shall have it in the form that is most binding on my nation. I swear to you on my sabre and poniard—and may they be turned against me if I break my oath!—that, if Chunda Sahib comes hither, I will guard him as the apple of my eye, and watch over him as my dearest treasure!"

"Then I may tell you," said the Frenchman, "that he is already close at hand. He has travelled through the night, and I can conduct your escort to the place where he is waiting for them. I cannot believe that your highness would play me false."

"You have my most solemn oath," replied Monackjee, as he successively touched the sabre by his side, and the dagger in his girdle. "I will order the escort to attend you."

Nevil withdrew still deeper into the shadow of the tents, and saw the French officer and his servants mount their horses, and the

Tanjorine soldiers join them with palanquins and torches. Monackjee watched their departure from the small circle of light at the entrance of the pavilion, and then retired within the silken curtains. Nevil remained silent and motionless at his post.

In about an hour, which appeared interminable to the young Englishman, the escort returned without the French officer, who had no doubt gone back to his own quarters, but with several persons in the palanquins. An old man of dignified aspect descended from one of them, and his servants gathered round to assist him. Monackjee came forth to meet him, and without speaking, made a sign to the soldiers, who instantly seized on the visitor, and loaded him with irons.

Nevil could scarcely contain his indignation at sight of this outrage, but he felt that he was powerless, and that his own life would probably be sacrificed if he moved or spoke. The venerable prisoner looked calmly at Monackjee, and said: "I have not deserved this treatment. I trusted to your faith, O Prince! and have delivered myself freely into your hands. Have I not your oath that you would grant me protection?"

"I have sworn," replied the other, "that I would guard you as my dearest treasure—and so I will, for none shall take you out of my grasp. Bring him into the pavilion, and let him be secured in my inner chamber. I will watch over him even as I promised!"

The old man bent his head resignedly on his breast, and was hurried by the soldiers into the pavilion. Monackjee followed with a satisfied and triumphant air. Nevil waited till all was quiet, and then returned to his own tent, hoping to enter it unperceived. But he found the guards awake, and in terrible consternation.

"O Sahib! what have you done, and what will become of us?" they cried. "We shall all be put to the torture!"

"Keep your own counsel, and I will keep mine," he replied. "I am not bound by the orders of your chief, and I chose to take a walk without asking any one's leave. Only hold your tongues, and I will answer for the rest."

He spoke with that confidence in himself, which had already begun to distinguish the ruling and conquering race, and the natives were subdued and silenced by his firmness.

They resumed their guard with a great show of vigilance, but evidently looked upon their prisoner with a kind of respectful awe. Towards morning, a messenger arrived at the tent, to summon him to the presence of Monackjee.

"You may now return to my friend Lawrence, the illustrious, the valiant in war," said the Tanjorine, "and tell him that half the work is already accomplished. I have this night captured our prime enemy Chunda Sahib!"

"Your highness must have been quick about it," said Nevil.

"Oh! yes, yes!" answered the Tanjorine, striking his forehead with his hand. "I have been like a skilful hunter, and have taken the prey in my toils. But I will come to visit your chief, and confer with him and our other allies on this great success. They will see what it is to have such a friend as I am!"

"I will set out immediately to announce your coming," said Nevil. "Will not your highness bring your captive with you?"

Monackjee looked at him with a keen and cunning glance, but replied in a careless

tone: "Oh! you need not be afraid he will escape. I shall leave him well guarded, and I shall not be long away from him."

"I wish the old chieftain were out of that treacherous rascal's clutches," said Nevil to the major, when he had returned to the English camp, and related the night's adventures. "He has been our bitter enemy, but he fought us openly in the field, and always behaved well to his English prisoners. My friend Maskelyne was kindly treated by him."

"I will save him if I can," responded the major, "but I fear he is in bad hands. The only chance is, that they all want to turn him to some profit."

That morning, a stormy conference was held in the tent of Major Lawrence. Thither came the Nabob Mahomed Ali, eager to get possession of his rival's person, and putting forward his claim as the sovereign of the territory that had been in dispute between them. But thither also came the leaders of the Mysoreans and Mahrattas, each urging the services he had rendered in the war, and demanding the custody of so important a captive, as a hostage for the fulfilment of sundry engagements on the part of the others.

To all this Monackjee opposed the undoubted fact, that he had made the capture, and that the prisoner was actually in his power; and it seemed clear that he would only part with his prize on the most exorbitant terms.

“But I am given to understand,” said Major Lawrence, “and I have it on the best authority, that Chunda Sahib only surrendered on conditions, which we are all bound in honour to see observed.”

When this was explained to Monackjee, he swore by everything sacred, that there were no conditions at all; and though he was staggered for a moment, when the major repeated the substance of the conversation with the French officer, he soon recovered his impudence, and declared that anything he might have said to the Frenchman was a fair stratagem of war to lure the enemy into a snare. Then Morari Row remarked, that he did not care how Monackjee had obtained possession of the prisoner—that was nothing to the purpose—the question was who had the best right to keep him, and the Mahrattas intended to assert their claim by force if necessary.

On this Major Lawrence proposed, that, as

the matter was likely to lead to serious quarrels amongst the allies, the captive should be committed to the charge of the English, who would engage for his safe keeping till some satisfactory arrangement could be arrived at. But against this reasonable plan they all protested together, and the conference broke up without any result, except the increase of their mutual jealousies and divisions.

Seeing that he could not depend on their acting much longer in union, the major determined to bring the war in Seringham to a close, by at once attacking the French in Jumbakistna. He made all his preparations for an assault, and summoned Clive to cross the Coleroon to his aid; but Monsieur Law had already given up the cause as lost, and although he at first held a high tone of defiance, and afterwards tried to prove that Chunda Sahib having surrendered, the French ought no longer to be treated as enemies by the English, he finished by capitulating with all his garrison. Lawrence granted honourable terms, and the officers were allowed their parole; but nearly three thousand prisoners, with many cannon and a large amount of stores and ammunition, were left in the hands of the conquerors.

There now only remained the Great Pagoda of Seringham, and this also surrendered soon after, without resistance. The last who yielded were a thousand of the valiant race of Rajpoots, who, inspired by zeal for their religion, declared that they would all be cut to pieces, before they would permit the foot of a stranger to profane the sacred recesses of the temple. The English, respecting their courage and enthusiasm, promised not to offend their scruples, and abstained from advancing beyond the wall of the third enclosure.

But, in the midst of his triumph, Major Lawrence was disturbed by a fresh visit from Monackjee, who came to complain that, instead of meeting with gratitude from his allies for the capture of Chunda Sahib, he was being molested by them all to force him to give up the prize. He wished to know if the major would afford him protection against the others, and maintain him in his right to keep the prisoner in his own custody. He added, that Morari Row had threatened to fetch away the captive at the head of six thousand horse.

Major Lawrence answered impatiently, that

he could not interfere in their intestine quarrels—that he was willing to repeat his offer to take charge of Chunda Sahib, if they chose to intrust him to the care of the English—but that it was a matter which rather concerned the honour of the native princes, who best knew what was fitting in their treatment of one of their own order.

Monackjee only smiled at this, and took his leave with the remark that he would consider what was best to be done.

When the major related this conversation to Clive, who had now joined him with his detachment, the latter knitted his brows and said: “I fear for the poor old chieftain’s life. If this villain finds that he cannot keep him safely, he will think nothing of murdering him.”

“If I really believed that,” answered Lawrence, “I would interfere at once.”

“Let me go with a troop of horse to see about it,” said Clive. “I think I know how to deal with these gentry.”

The major hesitated. “I cannot imagine he would go so far,” he said, “and I do not wish to be mixed up in these native broils, beyond what is absolutely required for the

defence of English interests. But you shall carry him a message, Mr. Brooke, with my urgent request that he will take no step whatever in this matter of Chunda Sahib, until I have seen him again."

Nevil lost no time in mounting and riding off on his mission; but as he approached the Tanjorine camp, he encountered a motley rabble pouring forth from amongst the tents, and in their midst a camel guarded by a company of soldiers. To the neck of the animal was attached a ghastly object—a human head but lately severed from the body—and the mob kept shouting as they advanced: "Make way, make way for the warriors of the Great Monackjee, who is sending the head of Chunda Sahib to his friend the Nabob at Trichinopoly!"

Nevil turned [sickening from the sight, and hastened back to his own camp with the news. The English officers expressed their extreme disgust, and the major his deep regret that he had not interfered more energetically.

"It is too late now," said Clive. "What is done cannot be undone. If we hunt with a pack of bloodhounds in our train, we must expect they will act after their kind."

“And now you will see,” said Lawrence, “that they will all be fighting for Trichinopoly. At all events, we have saved it from the French, and I will leave Dalton with a garrison there, to protect the Nabob’s interests. I think our work is done for the present, and that we may march through the Carnatic, without meeting an enemy bold enough to oppose us. Bussy is in the North with Salabut Jung, and Dupleix has no officer of reputation left. I am sorry that our campaign should close with so sad an incident as this brutal murder, for otherwise we have only cause for congratulations. Thanks to your services, gentlemen,” he added, bowing to them all, but directing his glance especially to Clive, “the pressing danger is over, and we may hope to take a little rest.”

So, after some brief delay, occasioned by the intrigues and quarrels of his allies, Major Lawrence broke up his camp, and departed with the bulk of his forces from the neighbourhood of Trichinopoly.

BOOK VIII.—FORT ST. GEORGE.

CHAPTER I.

LOVE PASSAGES.

WHEN Clive and Nevil arrived at Fort St. David on leave of absence from the army, they found that the seat of government was once more removed to Madras, and that many of the residents had accompanied the Governor and Council in their return to the latter place. Amongst these were the Maskelynes, who had taken the Chevalier and his daughter with them. The two friends therefore determined to follow them, and embarked in the first coasting-vessel that sailed for the required destination—so that the scene of this story is again shifted to Fort St. George.

Margaret and her brother received the

victorious soldiers with great cordiality, and informed Nevil, in reply to his anxious inquiries, that the Chevalier was gradually recovering from his wounds, though still very weak and much broken in health. Miss Maskelyne added, that she had grown very fond of that dear little French girl, whose devotion to her father had touched every heart; and Edmund gave it as his opinion, that France and Europe to boot could not produce a finer old gentleman than the Chevalier.

“But come and see for yourself, Nevil,” he continued, “and leave Clive and Meggy to discuss the campaign together. You cannot tell what an interest she takes in military affairs. She has turned her work-box into Trichinopoly, and her pin-cushion into Seringham—traced the course of the Cole-roon and Cavary with blue and white ribbons—put a thimble for the Great Pagoda, and marked out all your positions with knitting-needles. She can talk of nothing but strategy, and Clive himself will be her pupil in the art of war.”

“Mr. Brooke will own,” said Margaret, laughing, “that one of us at least can talk

as much nonsense as ever. But I will myself go and look for my little friend."

"No, no," returned Edmund, "you must stay and discuss tactics with Clive. Come along, Nevil! I think I know where to find the Chevalier."

So saying, he seized his friend by the arm, and led him to a small garden near the house, singing merrily all the way—

"The soldier is back from the field of war,
Where bullets are flying fast and far,
With all his limbs, and never a scar,
So well did his fortune aid him;
But, ere he can tell you when or why,
Some chit of a girl with a glance of her eye
Will pierce him through, and laugh to spy
How low in the dust she has laid him!

"'Tis vain to fight, and 'tis vain to flee,
He is doomed a willing slave to be,
A captive chained at a maiden's knee
Like all his sires before him;
For still as of old it comes to pass
That the lion is tame as the patient ass,
If once the hand of a buxom lass
Has thrown the bridle o'er him."

When they reached the garden, they came upon a pretty picture. The Chevalier was seated in a shady alcove, clad in a loose gown of flowered chintz, and resting on a long

staff. His face was pale and thin, but retained its former expression of dignity and benevolence. His daughter stood beside him in a robe of white muslin, looking pure, and fresh, and beautiful as a lily, and playing tenderly with the few grey locks that clustered about his brow. Her lute hung suspended by a blue ribbon from her neck, and books, drawings, and embroidery were scattered amongst the cushions at her feet. At sound of Maskelyne's song, they both raised their eyes at once, and saw the approaching visitors. A sudden light beamed from the countenance of the Chevalier, and a flush of pleasure mantled on the cheek of Louise.

"It is a great joy to me," said Ste. Croix to Nevil, "to see you once again, my friend and preserver. I have scarcely been able to thank you since you rescued me from the bayonets of your S  poys."

"If we talk of thanks," replied Nevil, "I know who has the most reason to be grateful. But I trust, my dear Chevalier, that you are regaining health and strength?"

"At my age, the process is slow, and the result doubtful. But God has been very good to me, and I have met with the kindest

friends and nurses. Not only my little girl here, but this gentleman and his sister, and all the people about, have attended me with the utmost care."

"You cannot have been better treated than I was at Pondicherry. I hope Mademoiselle Louise has not forgotten those days."

"Indeed I have not, Monsieur Nevil, and all the things you taught me. I sometimes think it was the happiest time of my life."

She said this quite frankly and simply, and Nevil answered in the same tone: "I am sure it was a happy time with me, although I was a prisoner in a foreign land."

"As I am now," said the Chevalier, smiling.

"Oh, no, my dear sir!" replied Nevil. "You are free to go whenever you please. All the French officers have been released on parole. But I hope and entreat you will not leave us, until you are quite restored to health."

"Yes, yes, you have need of rest, papa," said Louise. "You must not travel till you are quite well. Even coming by sea from Fort St. David was too much exertion for you. Mademoiselle Marguerite has told

me, that we can stay here as long as we like."

"I feel certain," said Maskelyne, politely, "that my sister is only too happy to have the pleasure of your company, mademoiselle, and we are all honoured by the presence of your gallant father."

With such mutual courtesies, the friends were again brought together, and in a short time Nevil found the old intimacy renewed. With the Chevalier his intercourse was familiar as ever, and in some respects of a still more filial character, now that the elder man was weak and suffering; but there was a perceptible difference in his relations with Louise. She was as friendly as before, as openly and unaffectedly pleased in his society—but there was a certain maidenly reserve on her part, a certain chivalrous deference on his, which interposed a barrier between them, unknown till now. And day by day there grew up in his heart—slowly, silently, almost unconsciously—a feeling with regard to her, that was far stronger and deeper than the boy's interest in a playful, innocent child, or the youth's admiration for the ripening charms of a beautiful girl. And with it

came the doubts, the fears, the fancies, the delicate scruples, the inexplicable longing, the immeasurable tenderness and devotion, which in all ages have accompanied the true and healthy development of the sweetest and noblest of the passions.

Yet nothing passed between them beyond the ordinary converse of friends. They were constant in their attendance on the Chevalier, who would sit or lie for hours in a kind of languid repose, listening to Nevil's talk, or the songs and music of his daughter. They borrowed books for him from the Governor's library, and read whole volumes for his amusement. Clive and Margaret would sometimes join their circle, and Maskelyne would look in upon them with a tale or a jest. But the three were generally alone together, and Nevil's presence was becoming almost indispensable to the Chevalier, when new events once more summoned the young Englishman to scenes of more active life.

"Dupleix is not yet beaten," said Clive to him one morning. "He has proclaimed our old enemy Rajah Sahib as Nabob in place of his father, and is trying to get up another confederacy against us. I hear that Jan

Begum is hand and glove with Morari Row, and that the Mahrattas are ready to change sides on the first occasion. Then our people have made a foolish attack on Gingee, and failed. We shall have to take the field again, Nevil, before long."

"Of course we must go if we are wanted," answered his friend, "and your services are sure to be required. But I confess I am sick of war, and would greatly prefer a little inglorious ease."

"It is all very pleasant," said Clive; "at least, I have come to think so of late. I never knew before what it was to enjoy dawdling and dreaming—but love and Margaret have turned me into a milksop."

"It does not seem to agree with you, Clive. You are not looking well."

"I have been feeling rather unwell, and the doctor tells me I ought to go to Europe for change of air. But I cannot leave till things here are settled. Do you know that Lawrence has come over from Fort St. David?"

"So I hear. What is the object of his visit?"

"I suppose he has come for supplies; but

I am to meet him at the Governor's, and I shall then learn all about it."

That afternoon, Clive informed Nevil, that Lawrence was somewhat uneasy' at the present aspect of affairs. The failure of the attempt on Gingee, which had been undertaken against the major's advice, had emboldened Dupleix to detach a force in the direction of Fort St. David, and to seize some vessels at sea, while employed in the conveyance of English troops. It was therefore resolved to strengthen the garrison at Fort St. David, and the major was to return immediately to that place with reinforcements.

"He will not have me this time," said Clive, "as I am reserved for another service, and he insists that I still need rest. But he wants you, Nevil, to talk to the Frenchmen. So that, if you can tear yourself away from your friend and his pretty daughter, you can go as the major's aide-de-camp."

"I am quite ready—though it will seem strange without you. I suppose we are to go by sea?"

"Yes; and the ship is to sail to-morrow morning. You have not much time for preparations and farewells."

"Enough for both," said Nevil. "We shall not require to make long speeches at parting, to convince us that the old friendship is still in existence."

"Oh! as for that, a grasp of the hand will be sufficient for you and me, and Maskelyne will sing us one of his jolly songs on the occasion. But listen to me, Nevil. My engagement to Margaret has opened my eyes to many things. I can see that you are in the same state of suspense as I was, when I stood staring like a fool at a fortress which I did not dare to capture."

"Are you talking of Arcot?" said Nevil, with mock gravity.

"Oh! you know very well what I mean. You encouraged me then, and I may give you a word of advice now. Make the best use of your time, and do not let slip your opportunity!"

He smiled significantly as he spoke, and then left Nevil to his reflections. The latter felt the truth of the remark, that he was in a state of suspense. Slowly, but surely, the knowledge had come to him, that one dear face was infinitely precious to him, one presence necessary to his happiness. Sleeping

or waking, in musings by day and dreams by night, the image of Louise de Ste. Croix floated before his imagination, and filled him with a great yearning to call the original his own. He thought how pleasant it would be to have her always with him—to watch over, protect, and cherish her—to kindle her fancy, awaken her intelligence, and respond to the warmest emotions of that young, 'innocent heart. He knew that she regarded him with affection—but he had his doubts whether it might not be the affection of a child for an elder brother—and then he hesitated on other grounds. The task, for which he had come to India, was not yet accomplished; he had made but little progress in the work he was to do for his mother and his home; and his friend the Chevalier might not be willing to bestow his daughter on a youth who had so few worldly advantages to offer in return. Then there were differences of country, differences of religion—the war raging between hostile races—the doubtful issue of the present contest—and a thousand other difficulties that might interfere with the realization of his wishes. Pondering over these things, he asked himself if it were right,

if it were honest, to woo when he might never be able to wed, or to seek for a love that might only end in disappointment and sorrow; and whether it would not be wiser to bear his burden in silence, and bury his hopes and aspirations in the secrecy of his own bosom.

It was in this mood that he wandered into the garden, and found the Chevalier in the alcove, asleep on a heap of cushions. The old man looked weary and worn, and his daughter held up a warning finger to Nevil, to caution him not to disturb the slumbers of the invalid. Then she stole forth noiselessly to meet him, and told him in whispers of her fear, that her father was growing more and more feeble. He consoled her as well as he could, reminding her that all recoveries from serious illness are slow, and that, even if the Chevalier sometimes appeared to retrograde, he might yet be gaining strength in the long run.

“Ah, no!” she said; “I have watched him too narrowly to be deceived. He was making good progress at one time, but now he is going back. The wounds are healed, but they have left him too weak, too ex-

hausted. Ah, Monsieur Nevil! I have never said this to any one but you—I have tried to hide it from myself—but a terror comes over me sometimes, when I look at his dear pale face and his poor thin hands. What would become of me if I should lose him? My father! My only friend!”

“Not your only friend, I hope,” said Nevil. “I grant that none could be to you what he has been, and I pray God, that he may be long spared to you. But you must not think that you have no other friend in the world.”

“Ah, yes! I know. Mademoiselle Marguerite and many people have been very kind to me. And my dear old Ayah loves me and would always take care of me! But it is not the same thing.”

“No, it is not the same thing,” answered Nevil. “But is there no other friend that you can remember, Louise?”

“You?” she said, her face suddenly brightening. “I should be very ungrateful if I did not remember all your goodness to me, from the time you first came to our house, when I was a little girl. But then, you see, you are always going away!”

“And I am going away now, Louise, to

fight once more against your countrymen. It is a hard necessity, but I cannot help it."

"Oh, this horrid war, Monsieur Nevil! To think that dear friends should turn their swords against each other, and that you and my father have been fighting on opposite sides in the same battle! But I shall never forget how you saved his life. He has told me all about it. He says he was down beneath the trampling feet of the Sepoys, with the bayonets glittering at his breast, when you dashed in amongst them like his good angel, careless of danger, careless of all consequences, and covered him with your own body. Oh, Monsieur Nevil, how can I ever thank you enough for that noble action?"

"My dear Louise," said Nevil, taking the little hand which she offered in token of gratitude, "I hope I should have done the same for any gallant officer in peril. But for your father, my friend and benefactor, it was the simplest act of duty. I only wish I could restore him to perfect health."

"Ah! if we could all be as when you first came to Pondicherry. They were such happy days—before you were taken ill, you know—when I began to learn English, and we used

to laugh at papa for his attempts to talk it. We shall never, never see such a happy time again."

"You were but a child then, Louise, and I was only a boy, and I suppose we were easily pleased with childish amusements. But I hope you have many happy years before you."

"I hope *you* have, Monsieur Nevil, and I think it is more likely. You will lead a busy life, and you will gain wealth and honour; you will go back one day to your mother and friends in England. But I have only my father, and if——" Here she broke off suddenly, and her eyes filled with tears.

Nevil had come to this interview with the wisest resolutions, but they all melted away at sight of those crystal drops.

"Louise," he said tenderly, "you acknowledged just now that I was your friend. Whatever happens, you can surely trust in my friendship never to desert you?"

"I know you will always think kindly of me," she answered; "but we shall probably be in quite different parts of the world, and when we leave Madras there is no certainty that we shall ever meet again."

"And why should we not be always

together?" said the youth impetuously. "I must now speak out, Louise, and tell you exactly what I feel. You were dear to me as a child—you are ten thousand times dearer to me as a woman. Ever since I met you again at the convent, I have thought of nothing, dreamt of nothing but you. I did not know it at first. I fancied it was a brother's love for his little sister; but now I know it is something sweeter still. I love you, Louise, with my whole soul; and if I could but hope that my love was returned, and that you might come to look on me as something nearer than a brother, I would direct all my efforts to win you, and devote all my life to your happiness."

Louise trembled with emotion as she listened, and hid her face in her hands with a natural sense of maidenly shame and fear. It had all come upon her by surprise, and she scarcely knew what to think, or what to answer. She was so simple and innocent, that she was quite unprepared for any such declaration; and yet those few manly words had touched the deepest feelings of her young heart, and revealed to her a world of sensations hitherto unknown and unsuspected. It

was some minutes before she recovered herself sufficiently to speak ; but then, though she blushed all over, she addressed her lover with modest grace and dignity.

“I did not expect this. But I am not going to be a hypocrite, or to tell you anything but the truth. Since you first came to us at Pondicherry, I have never seen any one that I liked as much as you, and I often wished when a child that I had really been your little sister. When you were ill, and when you went away from us, it was a great trouble and grief to me. And afterwards, when you saved my father’s life, and came to fetch me from the convent, I thought I could never thank you enough for all your kindness. And I knew I should never forget you, and that you would always remember your little friend ; but I did not suppose you could love me in this way, because—because, you see, I was so much younger and more ignorant. And what you have said now was perhaps only out of pity, because you found I was fretting about my father, and you could not bear to let me feel friendless and lonely. If so, let it be all unsaid, and everything just as it was before.”

“Louise,” interrupted Nevil, “you do me and yourself injustice. If I have delayed, if I have hesitated to speak, it was that I felt myself every way your inferior—every way, except in the depth and fervour of my love!”

He encircled her waist with his arm, and drew her closer to his breast. She looked up at him with those large, luminous eyes, so touching in their mute tenderness, and did not retreat from his embrace. Their lips met for a moment, and that kiss was the seal of a sacred bond of union.

“I have found my Sakoontala again,” said Nevil, fondly and proudly. “She has come back to me like a princess in a fairy tale, released from enchantment. She was only a little bird before, singing in the wood, and now she is a beautiful lady. But she has not forgotten the old, happy, childish days.”

“How could I forget them,” she answered, “when I used always to be thinking of them? Every corner of our house at Pondicherry reminded me of some old event. And look here,” she added, taking a small gold seal from her bosom, where it hung from a silken cord, “the Cupid on his lion has never left

me day or night, and I could always talk to him of you."

"And look here," said Nevil, producing in his turn the silver medal of the Virgin, "I have worn this nearest my heart in siege, and storm, and battle, and have sometimes almost believed that it had a charm to turn away the enemy's bullets. But it was not for that I valued it so highly. It was for the sake of her who gave it. I would have guarded it in every extremity, and only parted from it with life."

"Dear, dear Nevil!" said Louise, as she gazed with moist eyes on the little piece of silver. "Now I know that I was always present to your memory, and that I really had a warm place in your heart. Whatever may chance hereafter, this will be a great happiness for me. But we are talking here like two children, just as we used to do, forgetting how many things may come to part us and keep us asunder."

"Oh, let us enjoy the present while we can!" replied Nevil. "We must encounter the future as we may. I had schooled myself in lessons of prudence, and meant to suppress and hide my strongest feelings, lest they

should only lead to disappointment. But love would not have it so, and betrayed me in spite of myself. And now all doubts and fears are over, all scruples swallowed up in the one thought that you are mine. We may have to wait, we may have to go through trials and sorrows, but I have the force to dare and to conquer everything, now that I may look upon you as my own."

"Yes, I am your own," said Louise. "That is, I will never be any one else's. It may be—I do not know—but it may be that a thousand things will happen to prevent our being married. Then you shall not be bound to me, if you do not wish it; but I will always keep my faith to you. I am sure that Madame Dupleix wants me to marry Monsieur Kirjean, but I would die rather than wed him—and no one but you shall ever have your poor little Sakoontala."

"And I swear to you," cried Nevil passionately, "that I will never give up the hope of winning you, and that nothing but death——"

"Hush!" she said, laying her hand on his arm; "my father is stirring in his sleep, and you will wake him if you speak so loud."

They walked towards the alcove together,

and gazed on the sleeping form of the Chevalier. Pale and haggard as he was, he retained the noble air of the warrior, and looked like the figure of some ancient knight carved in marble on a monument. The two young people watched him with mingled concern and admiration.

"Nevil," said Louise suddenly, "I have no secrets from my father. I must tell him what has passed between us."

"Certainly," he answered, "you must tell him all. But not in the short time I have to remain with you. It might distress and agitate him, and then I should go away with a heavy heart. You will have ample opportunity to break it gradually to him."

"I do not think it will distress him, Nevil. He has never refused his daughter anything, and he loves you already as if you were his son."

She smiled sweetly as she spoke, and bent over her father, and kissed him. The touch was light as that of a butterfly on a flower, but it roused the Chevalier from his slumbers.

"What! is that you, Nevil?" he said. "Where have you been all day?"

"I have been talking to Clive, and I have

instructions to prepare for another expedition with Major Lawrence. We are to set out to-morrow morning."

"So soon!" cried Louise, growing pale.

"It is the soldier's destiny, my child," said her father. "We shall miss our friend sadly, but we cannot wish him to neglect his duty."

The talk that followed was suited to the occasion, expressive of regrets at parting, and hopes of a speedy return, the natural interchange of sentiment amongst dear and familiar friends—but no word was spoken to indicate the new and more tender relations of the lovers. They both felt that there was no time to explain what had happened, and that it would be better to leave Louise to tell it all at leisure. But Nevil's manner to the Chevalier was warmer and more affectionate than ever, and when he parted from him at last, it was with expressions of almost filial devotion.

The old man gave him a warrior's blessing, and Louise held out her hand to him, and bade him farewell with a trembling voice. But when he had gone a short distance from the alcove, he heard a light footstep behind

him, and turning saw that she had followed him.

“Nevil! dear Nevil!” she said—and flung herself in tears upon his bosom.

He soothed, and comforted, and kissed her again and again. Then, with a great effort, they tore themselves asunder, and went their several ways in a whirl of contending feelings—a strange, wild, delirious ecstasy of joy and sorrow.

CHAPTER II.

CHANCES OF WAR.

FROM his palace at Pondicherry, where he still affected the pomp and state of a monarch, the indefatigable Dupleix continued to carry on his intrigues, and despatched his predatory forces to annoy and harass the English. A body of his troops had lately appeared in the neighbourhood of Fort St. David, and only retired on hearing of the arrival of Major Lawrence from Madras. That officer at once took the field, and advanced as far as the boundary hedge, which marked the limits of the French territory. His instructions were not to pass the line, unless compelled by imperative necessity, and the French on the other hand did not seem disposed to come out and meet him. After a short delay, in which nothing was effected on either side,

the major gave orders to retreat, and fell back with some precipitation.

The English were marching in the sullen mood, which distinguishes British soldiers on a retreat, when the major rode up to Nevil, and addressed him in a cheerful tone.

"The men seem to be out of spirits, Mr. Brooke. What is the matter?"

"They do not like turning their backs on the enemy, major. But they will no doubt find there is some good reason for it."

"I am glad you do me that justice," said the major, laughing. "I was afraid you might be comparing my slow tactics with the rapid movements of our friend Clive. But the fact is, there was no other mode of getting at the enemy. If I am not much mistaken, they will follow us as soon as they think we are running away."

The major was right in his calculation. When Dupleix learned that the English were in full retreat on Fort St. David, he sent peremptory orders to his nephew Monsieur Kirjean, to pursue them with the whole of the force at his disposal. The latter was not so confident as his uncle, that the English were in a state of panic, and represented the

prudence of collecting more troops and proceeding with due deliberation. But Dupleix would listen to no remonstrances, and insisted that his kinsman should fall at once on the fugitives, and deal a decisive blow before they could gain the shelter of their fortress.

It was at Bahoor, a village between Pondicherry and Fort St. David, that Major Lawrence resolved to make a stand. He waited there till Kirjean came within two miles of him, and then, starting suddenly at three o'clock in the morning, advanced to the encounter. The Sepoys marched first, followed by the English, and flanked by the artillery, while the Nabob's cavalry moved forward on the right. A little before the dawn, the Sepoys engaged with those of the enemy, and the combat lasted till daylight. Then the French were discovered drawn up in a strong position, between a high bank and a large pond, and as the English formed in their front the operation was impeded by a brisk fire from eight pieces of cannon. This did not, however, shake the steadiness of the assailants, who swept onward to the attack, firing their small-arms; and then occurred one of those rare passages in war—a hand-to-

hand struggle with bayonets. The French stood their ground manfully, till the deadly steel crossed in the fierce onslaught; but the British Grenadiers broke through their centre, and immediately the whole line gave way and fled. The native cavalry would have completed their destruction, if they had not preferred to employ themselves in plundering the camp.

Nevil, cheering on his countrymen to the charge, was carried by his enthusiasm a little in advance of the others, when he saw a French officer rushing directly at him. It was Monsieur Kirjean, whose horse had been killed under him, and who was now fighting on foot with the recklessness of despair. The two young men met in single combat, and Kirjean, who was the better swordsman, was pressing Nevil very closely; when, as he made a thrust which would probably have proved fatal, his foot fortunately slipped, and he fell heavily to the ground. Before he could rise or recover himself, Nevil had sprung upon him and wrenched the sword from his hand, while the point of his own weapon was directed against the breast of his rival.

"Take your life, sir," he said, as he withdrew the glittering blade. "I told you we should meet in battle."

The Frenchmen rose slowly to his feet, and for a moment glared savagely at his antagonist. But he had sufficient tact to see, that any display of ill-temper would be at once useless and ridiculous; so he smoothed his ruffled countenance, and resumed his ordinary manner as he answered: "The cards are against me, sir, and the loser pays. I am your prisoner."

"Look to this gentleman, Tom," cried Nevil to the soldier nearest to him, "but treat him well, and see that he comes to no harm. He is an officer of rank, and must be brought in safety to Bahoor."

So saying, he plunged forward through the smoke and din of the battle, over ground slippery with blood, and strewn with the dead and wounded. But resistance was virtually at an end, and little remained to do, save to make prisoners and capture the stores and artillery. The contest had been short and sharp, but the victory was decisive; and Major Lawrence, recalling his troops from the pursuit, led them back to the camp

at Bahoor, and the next day returned in triumph to Fort St. David.

"You shall carry this news to Madras, Mr. Brooke," said the major, "and take with you Monsieur Kirjean and the other French officers. It is a distinction you have well deserved."

Nevil could only bow in acknowledgment of the compliment, and was soon once more at sea, in charge of some dozen French officers of various grades. His courteous manners made a favourable impression on these gentlemen, and in spite of the mortification of defeat, after the first moment of bitterness was over, they resigned themselves to their fate with the light and easy philosophy of their nation, and began to converse cheerfully and pleasantly with the young Englishman.

Monsieur Kirjean indeed held himself aloof, and maintained a silent reserve, especially as to what concerned the state of affairs at Pondicherry. But the others were not so reticent, and from them Nevil learned many particulars, which convinced him of the growing unpopularity of Duplex. Even at the height of his fortune, that extraordinary

man had provoked animosity by his vanity and the insolence of his pretensions; and now that his schemes were no longer attended with success, his countrymen (always impatient of failure) were inclined to take unfavourable views of all his actions.

“We do justice to the valour of *Messieurs les Anglais*,” they said, “but we think you are greatly indebted to the arrogant folly of some on our side. If a certain person had thought less of playing the Indian Rajah, and more of his duty as a subject of the King of France, we should not be in our present position. It is all very well to ride on the back of an elephant, but then one should know how to manage the animal, and it is not pleasant to fall from such a height.”

“But surely,” said Nevil, “no one doubts the great abilities of Monsieur Dupleix?”

“The *Marquis de Dupleix*, if you please! That is the title he has obtained from the French court. Heaven knows how many titles he has in India. Well! no one doubts his abilities for *finesse* and intrigue. But a fox is not a lion after all, and should not pretend to roar like the king of beasts. And then he has always wanted to put himself

forward in everything, and to keep other men (as good as himself) in the background. We owe him but little gratitude, and if he falls, he will not find many to pity him."

"We English have no reason to like him," said Nevil, "but we have always thought him a very remarkable man."

"Oh, remarkable enough! Some *charlatans* are very remarkable men. And Jan Begum, too, is a very remarkable woman, as some of our young fellows can tell to their cost. Then there is that little girl of theirs, whom they wanted to marry to the Great Mogul!"

"I never knew they had a daughter."

"Oh, she must have been at school when you were at Pondicherry! After she came out, no alliance was good enough for the young princess. But Mademoiselle had a will of her own, and fell in love with Bussy, and if ever he returns from his campaigns with Salabut Jung in the Mahratta country, he will probably win her hand. A brave fellow like Bussy is a good match for any girl; but her parents would have liked to see her an empress!"

From all this Nevil concluded, that the

star of Dupleix was on the wane. He forbore, however, to ask for any information that was not volunteered by his prisoners, and they were soon engaged in lively talk on more general subjects. By the time they reached Fort St. George, they were all, with the exception of Kirjean, on easy and familiar terms.

When Nevil had delivered his news to Mr. Saunders, who congratulated him warmly on the late success, he was about to retire in search of Clive, but was called back by the Governor.

"I hope our work is nearly over, Mr. Brooke," said the latter, "but something yet remains to be done, before the French power is quite broken in the Carnatic. They have still two strong places to the north of the river Paliar, from which they can give us great annoyance. We shall not be safe, till Covelong and Chingliput are in our hands."

"Is Major Lawrence to command in this new expedition, sir?"

"No; he cannot be spared from the neighbourhood of Fort St. David. I am very badly off here both for troops and officers, and I do not know what I should have done,

had it not been for your friend Clive. I am sorry to say he is in very poor health, but as usual he has volunteered his services, and is about to start with some of the worst tatterdemalions that ever came out from England. I hope, Mr. Brooke, he may count on you as one of his officers."

"Certainly, sir, if I am wanted. After this affair is over, I trust we may consider ourselves secure, and then I shall ask permission to return to civil life."

"I shall be glad of your assistance in either capacity, Mr. Brooke, and I am sure you will do well whatever you undertake."

"Your Excellency is very kind to say so."

Nevil found Clive looking pale and ill, but as energetic as ever in his preparations for action. His eye lighted up when he saw his friend and aide-de-camp, and he greeted him with a burst of pleasure.

"You are just in time, my boy, to help me at a pinch. I have scarcely an officer I can depend upon, except Cooper and Joseph Smith, and such a set of fellows to lead as you never saw before. They must have swept the jails of London to get them together. They are worse than Falstaff's

recruits, and if we were in England, I would not march through Coventry or any other decent town with them. But we shall make something of the ragged rascals before we have done with them."

"How do you know that?"

"Because they are English after all—and that is enough. I have faith in the breed, Nevil. But I have heard of your exploits at Bahoor, and I wish you and the major joy with all my heart. And now, if you are to go with me, you will only be able to get a glimpse of your friends here, and to bid them farewell again. I have taken leave of Margaret already."

"You hardly look fit for a campaign, Clive."

"Oh! that is nothing. The effect of luxury and idleness. A little movement will brace me up in no time. But how shall you like leaving that coxcomb Kirjean with the fair Louise?"

"I am not afraid on that score."

"I do not think you need, Nevil. I have seen how she thrills all over when your name is mentioned, and Margaret has no doubt—but I suppose I must not betray confidence

even to you. Now go! I will not rob you of the few moments we have to spare."

The lovers met in the same garden as before, and in presence of the Chevalier, who occupied his accustomed couch in the alcove. He seemed to have grown weaker during Nevil's short absence, but there was no mistaking his joy at seeing him, or his disappointment at hearing that he was to leave them again immediately.

"So soon!" he said. "I had hoped we should spend some time together. But since it cannot be, I will speak at once on the subject that is nearest to my heart. Louise has told me what has passed between you."

"I knew that she would do so," answered Nevil, "and I have trusted to the fatherly affection you have always shown me, to forgive the presumption of my hopes."

"Presumption! that is not the word. I could wish no better alliance than with a true and loyal gentleman like yourself—and personally, Nevil, you are very dear to me. But if it was not presumptuous—it may have been imprudent."

He paused as if exhausted, and gazed tenderly at his daughter. She threw her

arms round his neck, and looked imploringly at Nevil. Then, as the latter was about to answer, the Chevalier continued.

“Let me finish what I have to say. Under favourable circumstances, I know of none to whom I would rather commit the happiness of my child. But all things are unsettled. Though France and England are nominally at peace, your countrymen and mine are fighting for every inch of ground in India. Then all our interests are at stake. None of us can tell how we shall fare from one day to the other. To marry now would be like wedding in the midst of a battle, or on a ship foundering at sea.”

“But the war will soon be at an end,” said Nevil.

“You speak as a conqueror,” said the Chevalier, with a faint smile. “But I have some pride as a Frenchman, and could not surrender my little girl as a prize of war.”

“Oh, papa!” cried Louise, clasping her hands; “Monsieur Nevil does not mean that. He is too good, too generous, to think of our condition as prisoners!”

“Your father knows, dear Louise,” said

Nevil firmly, "that no change of circumstances could make any difference in my feelings towards you and yours. Whether you were glittering in the court at Versailles, or wandering as fugitives in the Himalayas, you would be to me what you were at Pondicherry—my friends and benefactors, to whom I owe the love and gratitude of a life."

"Do not talk of gratitude," answered the Chevalier. "That debt has been paid long ago. But love—yes! you owe me some love—and now I will put it to the proof. It would be no sign of it, to separate father and child during the short term I may yet have to live—and I feel that I ought to be with my countrymen, and you with yours, till this struggle is over. I have lingered here too long already, and I am anxious to return to our people. Monsieur Dupleix is no friend of mine; but he is a French officer in a position of great difficulty, and if I can no longer use my sword, I may yet have strength left to aid him with my counsel. I might even be instrumental in coming to some arrangement with the English—and then——"

"And then," cried Nevil, grasping his

hand, "you would not refuse to call me your son!"

"At all events," said the Chevalier, "I should then be able to listen honourably to honourable proposals. No one could suspect our motives, or cast a doubt upon our patriotism. But you must see, my dear boy, that the future is dark and uncertain. It would be wrong to give pledges that we might never have the power to redeem."

"I ask for no pledges," replied the youth. "I would have Louise as free as air. I only ask to be allowed to hope, that the time may yet come when, if she still loves me, you will bless and sanction our loves."

"Be sure of this, Nevil," said Louise, in a sweet, low voice which was yet distinctly audible, "that I shall not change, whatever else changes. I shall never leave my father, and I shall obey him in all things as I have done from a little child—but nothing will ever make me break my faith to you. We may never be united, but I shall be yours all the same."

Two large tears stood in the eyes of the Chevalier, as he raised himself feebly on his couch, and drew his daughter towards him.

"My children," he said, "I am weak and failing—and I cannot speak much—and I may not be long with you—but I know that I can trust you both. You will not seek to come together, until you can do so consistently with duty and honour—and should that day arrive, and you remain in the same mind as at present—why, then—whether I am in this or another world—you may count upon a father's blessing."

He held out his hand to Nevil, who pressed it reverently to his lips. There was no need to discuss the subject further. A silent treaty had been made by those three, and they all understood its conditions. After a few words of kindly farewell, Nevil took his departure, and Louise accompanied him to the garden-gate. One last look, one tender embrace, and he was gone.

As he hurried along the street, he encountered Monsieur Kirjean. They saluted each other gravely, and Nevil was about to pass on, when the Frenchman suddenly stopped him.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "You may perhaps think, that I am under some obligation to renounce my claims to the favour

of a certain young lady, because an accident once put my life in your power. If so, let me tell you that you are mistaken."

"Monsieur Kirjean," replied Nevil, "I have nothing to do with your claims, whether real or imaginary, and I will not introduce a lady's name into any dispute between us. If you mean, that the chance of war has given me no title to dictate to you the conduct of your private affairs, I quite agree with you. But I presume that I am talking to a gentleman, and that any pursuit in which you may be engaged, any rivalry that may exist between you and me, will be carried on fairly and openly. In that case, I have no more right to interfere with your actions, than you have with mine. I have the honour to wish you a good morning."

"*Peste!*" muttered Kirjean between his teeth, as Nevil bowed and left him. "There is no getting at these English. A Frenchman would have set me at defiance—challenged me to single combat—given me the lie, or struck me in the face. But what is one to do with these cold-blooded islanders, who have no more feeling than the cliffs on their coast? And the worst of it is that my

hands are tied, because this impertinent son of Albion may boast that he spared my life. However, Louise de Ste. Croix is yet to win, and if it were only that he is my rival, I will not abandon the pursuit. I make sure he is going away again, and the absent are always in the wrong."

The expedition to Covelong and Chingliput was amongst the most extraordinary of Clive's exploits. In a state of health that would have confined most men to their beds, he left Madras at the head of the strangest set of scarecrows that ever marched against an enemy. He had indeed already drilled them into some shape, worked night and day to teach them the use of their weapons, acquired a kind of popular influence over them, and flattered himself that he had inspired them with a portion of his own courage. But when he arrived before the walls of Covelong, his confidence was destined to be put to a severe test.

A party having been sent in advance, under Lieutenant Cooper, that officer was killed by a chance shot, which so terrified his troops that they immediately took to flight, and would probably have run back to Madras,

had they not been stopped by Clive. He threw himself into the midst of the fugitives, rallied them with great difficulty, and succeeded by threats and entreaties in persuading them once more to approach the fort. But when the operations of the siege began—for the French commandant refused to surrender the place—these wonderful soldiers could scarcely be kept to their posts, for they started at the least noise, and were ready to fly at every alarm; and a cannon-ball having struck the rock near which they were erecting a battery, and killed or wounded several of their number, the rest were so frightened that they sought for refuge wherever it could be found, and one of them was discovered some hours after, concealed in the bottom of a well!

“What do you think of these fellows, Nevil?” asked Clive. “Are they of the same blood as ourselves?”

“I think,” answered Nevil, after a moment’s reflection, “that with a few rare exceptions—the born heroes—men require some strong motive to make them expose themselves to danger. Pride, honour, patriotism, the sense of duty, the fear of shame, all these things

have power to conquer the natural instinct to keep out of harm's way. But what should these poor fellows know of any such motives? Their lives have been spent in all kinds of shifts to escape the constable and the jail, and the only thing they are proud of is dexterity in cheating the gallows."

"Quite true," said Clive, "but we must try and make something of them. We might flog or shoot a few of them, but I do not think it would be the best plan. There must be some English mettle in the rascals, if we could but find it out."

And to work Clive set at this apparently hopeless task. Laying aside all his shyness and reserve, he mixed familiarly with the rabble he had to lead, talked to them, jested with them, laughed at them, sounded every note that could possibly find an echo in their bosoms, and above all set them an example of reckless courage that carried all before it. In the course of two or three days, during which he and his officers (a mere handful) were almost alone in the hottest fire, he had roused or shamed his soldiers into some feeling of military honour; and before the close of that short campaign, the men who had run away

at the noise of a gun, and could not be brought to face an enemy, were ready to follow their commander into every danger, and to stand their ground with the dogged determination of their race.

It was not the least of Clive's achievements, and the results were signally successful. Covelong capitulated after a brief resistance, and the very next morning, Ensign Joseph Smith, going out to take a walk, discovered a large body of men advancing from Chingliput to relieve the place. Informed of this, Clive took his measures accordingly, laid an ambuscade for the approaching forces, surprised and totally defeated them, and (following up his victory) arrived at Chingliput almost as soon as the news of the engagement. He could now trust his soldiers, and lost not a moment in beginning the siege of the fortress. But the garrison was already stunned and panic-struck by the rapidity of his movements, and when, after the necessary preliminaries, he made his preparations for an assault, the French commandant offered to surrender, on being allowed to retire with the honours of war. Clive at once granted these conditions, and was himself astonished at the ease with

which he had gained a stronghold that would still have been capable of a long and obstinate defence.

“I can scarcely believe,” said Nevil, as they marched back to Fort St. George, “that these are the same fellows with whom we left Madras not two months ago. Do you remember how they went slouching along the road, and peered about them as if they saw a ghost or a thief-taker in every bush? And now they walk with heads erect like men, and look as if they were a match for any foe.”

“I told you they must have the right stuff in them, if we did but know how to hammer it into shape,” answered Clive. “I confess I was nearly giving it up in despair at one time. But my officers have never failed me, and I owe my success to their assistance.”

“We should have been wretched curs, if we had not stood by our commander. But now that the French have only Pondicherry left in the Carnatic, and that Mahomed Ali seems firm in his seat as Nabob, I hope we may be able to sheathe our swords.”

“To tell you the truth, Nevil, I shall be forced to do so. My strength is giving way, and more than once during this last campaign

I thought I should have sunk from mere exhaustion. However, my work is done for the present, and Lawrence will be here to make all safe. I must try and get to England, and I hope Margaret will go with me. And you should come too, for you have earned your leave of absence."

"Not yet, my dear Olive. Not till I have accomplished what I came for to India. I cannot go home till I have gained independence."

"But look here, Nevil. There will be a good store of prize-money, and I will see that you have your share."

"I shall not refuse whatever is fairly mine, and it will enable me to help my mother, and do many things that I wish. But I must wait and labour some years, before I can redeem my father's land. I hope the Governor will give me some civil appointment."

"You shall have all my interest with Saunders, and I know he has a high opinion of you. But I wish we were going home together. It is true, there is another tie to keep you in India. I had almost forgotten the fair Louise."

“About that, and all the rest, there is nothing but uncertainty,” said Nevil. “Only, when I think of what *you* have done, I feel that all things are possible.”

CHAPTER III.

PARTING OF FRIENDS.

WHEN Clive and Nevil returned to Madras, the first person they met was Edmund Maskelyne, who wished them joy of their new conquests, and gave them good accounts of his sister and others.

“But I fear Nevil will not be so well pleased with my news,” he said. “In consequence of orders from England, where I suppose there have been remonstrances from the court of Versailles, the French officers have all been sent back to Pondicherry, on a simple promise not to serve against us during the present war. And amongst them is our friend the Chevalier.”

“You do not mean that he has left already!”

“Yes; he and his daughter are gone.

Margaret will be able to tell you more about it. I am sorry I was so abrupt in my tidings, for they seem to have taken all the colour from your cheeks, Nevil."

"It is a great disappointment certainly, but only one of the many we all have to bear in life. Thank Heaven! I am not of a desponding temper, and can always look forward hopefully to the future. But Clive here will require all your nursing, Edmund. He is very far from well."

"Margaret shall nurse him; and I will sing of his exploits, like a bard of old!"

"You may have to sing my dirge, Edmund. I sometimes feel as if that would be the most likely."

"Nonsense, man! you are falling into one of your gloomy fits; and no wonder, after the strain you have had on body and mind. But all that is over now.

'Ambition may roam
O'er the field and the billow,
But Love sits at home
And is smoothing the pillow,
And safe in their nest
At the end of the story
Will teach him that rest
Is far sweeter than glory!'

There you have an old moral, tacked to a new song of my own composing."

When the officers had reported themselves at head quarters, Nevil took the first opportunity to learn from Margaret Maskelyne all she knew about the Chevalier and his daughter.

"Yes, they are gone, Mr. Brooke," she said, "and very sad I have been to lose my dear little Louise. After you left the last time, Monsieur Kirjean was a good deal with the Chevalier, and I have no doubt gave him messages from Monsieur Duplex which hastened their departure. The old gentleman was hardly fit to travel, and I did what I could to detain them on the score of his health; but a ship had been provided to take the French officers to Pondicherry, and he seemed to think he could go by sea without inconvenience. I am charged to deliver these letters to you."

Nevil received them with visible agitation, and excusing himself to Miss Maskelyne, who begged him not to stand upon ceremony, he retired a little apart, and read in French as follows :—

"MY DEAR NEVIL,

"The laws of honour and duty, which you will be the first to acknowledge, compel me to rejoin my countrymen. I quit this hospitable mansion with regret, and am doubly sorry that I cannot even wait for your return. I can only hope that we may yet meet in more peaceful times ; but whether that wish be gratified or not, and whatever the frail goddess Fortune may have in store, be assured of the lasting esteem and affection of

"HENRI DE STE. CROIX.

"P.S.—My little girl is well, and I trust happy. She always has a smile for her poor old father."

The above writing was in large, clear, formal characters, elaborated in the old stately fashion, but evidently traced with weak and tremulous fingers. The other letter was in a small, delicate, feminine hand.

"Oh, dear Nevil ! we are going away," it said. "My father believes it to be right, and I have no doubt he has good reasons for all he does, but my heart swells, and the tears.

rush to my eyes at the thought. We are going away! and I can see you returning from the war, full of joy—only to find us gone, and our places empty. Then so many, many things may happen to prevent our meeting again. But I ought not to be so foolish as to write in this way. I know that the good God orders everything for the best, and that we should take the sunshine or the rain, just as He pleases to send it. And indeed, dear Nevil, I have cause to be happy and grateful. Nothing can deprive me of the memory of your kindness from the first, and the bright, beautiful hours we have spent together, and the sweet satisfaction of being loved. I would not change those recollections for all the enjoyments in the world, and I hope they give you some pleasure also. Then I have my father to nurse and cherish, and you have your duty to your mother and your country. Our path is clear before us, and we shall yet find strength in sorrow, and consolation in absence. For the rest, I may perhaps never be to you what I wish—but in life or in death you will have the love of your

“LOUISE.

"P.S.—I have had an explanation with Monsieur Kirjean, and have let him see that his attentions are unwelcome. I do not think that he will trouble me any more. Write to me under cover to my father, if you think it wise to write at all. Whether you write or not, I shall be satisfied if I know that you are safe and well."

When Nevil had read these letters, he questioned Miss Maskelyne eagerly as to all that had happened, and found her quite ready to give him full particulars. She had grown to be much attached to Louise, and on terms of close intimacy with her, and could relate a number of those little incidents which have such intense interest for a lover. She spoke cheerfully, for she was herself in a bright, hopeful mood, and could not bring herself to believe that all would not come right with her friends.

"You may depend upon it, Mr. Brooke," she said, "that this separation is only temporary. She loves you if ever a girl did, and love, like faith, can remove mountains."

"But, in the mean time, the suspense will

be weary enough, Miss Maskelyne; and when you, and Clive, and Edmund are all gone, I shall have no one even to talk to about it."

"Oh, we shall see you and her too in England before long! I shall often think of you, Mr. Brooke, for I have a young brother of your name, whom I am very fond of. I hear he is studying mathematics, and likely to prove a great astronomer."

"I wish him every success, but I own that my star is just now near the earth. When are we to lose you, Miss Maskelyne?"

"Very soon now, I believe. I am already busy with dresses and preparations. I shall be happy to take anything for you to England."

"I shall profit by your kind offer, and may ask your help in choosing shawls and muslins for home. Ah me! what magic there is in that little word 'home'!"

"It has a very pleasant sound certainly, and I suppose we English never forget it in any part of the world. And yet, when we are there, we are always grumbling about the climate or something."

"The perversity of human nature in general, and the special privilege of English-

men. Yet I think, if I were once settled in Warwickshire, I should not wish to leave it again."

"That is, if you had your Indian Sakoon-tala with you."

"Oh, that follows, of course!—but would it be home to her?"

"You need not be afraid. A woman that really loves can make her home anywhere with her husband."

"Which only shows how much better and more unselfish your sex is than ours."

"I don't know," said Margaret, laughing. "It only shows perhaps that we are weaker, and more easily led by the stronger will. Heigh-ho! I sometimes feel as if I were about to give up my liberty for ever."

"Excuse me, Miss Maskelyne, but that is all nonsense. Clive is a terrible fellow to his enemies, but he will be tame enough with you."

"We shall see," said Margaret. "I could wish he were looking a little fiercer at present. I am very anxious about his health."

And in truth Clive seemed threatened with a serious illness, and for some weeks caused much alarm to his friends. But his health

partially revived after a short period of repose, and it was then resolved not to delay his marriage and his departure for Europe. He kept his word to Nevil, and procured for him a considerable share of prize-money, and a lucrative appointment as Interpreter and Assistant Secretary to the Council at Madras, where Mr. Saunders held him in high esteem. All Nevil's leisure moments were now devoted to preparing letters and presents for England. Nobody was forgotten. Many choice gifts accompanied the remittances he made to his mother, and such stores of Indian pickles and preserves as he knew would delight the heart of Molly. He sent elegant dresses and ornaments to Madame de la Rochelle, rare specimens of natural curiosities to her husband, and oriental maps and drawings to his former schoolmaster. He wrote only a few civil lines to his uncle, but he had shawls, and fans, and trinkets for his aunt and cousins, and a stock of gay Bandanas and jars full of Chutnee and Curry-powder for old Crabtree. It was the first time in his life that he was able to indulge a little in munificence, and the experiment was very gratifying to the native generosity of his disposition.

But as the time for parting drew nigh, a certain gloom fell on the small circle of friends, in spite of homeward views and marriage festivities. Under almost any circumstances, the last days in a place where people have been long together are somewhat sad, especially if old comrades are to be left behind. Before the wedding, Clive's officers gave him a farewell banquet, and after the ordinary toasts and speeches, Maskelyne was called on for a song. It was in a graver tone than usual that he complied with the request.

“ Oh, fair is India's starry night
 When day's fierce heat is done !
 The very moon above is bright
 As England's common sun.
 And all around in varied hue
 A world of beauty gleams,
 Such as our childhood never knew,
 Or only saw in dreams !

“ Yet dearer far the misty glade
 With soft winds whispering nigh,
 Where oft in early youth we strayed
 Beneath a clouded sky ;
 And sweeter 'mid the darkest night
 That wraps the isle in gloom,
 The little, friendly, twinkling light
 From some familiar room !

“Then if to soothe the parting pain
One gentle hope aspire,
It is that we may meet again
Around an English fire—
May there the splendour and the pride
Of Indian scenes recall,
And find our quiet chimney-side
Is happier still than all!”

“Where did you learn that song, Edmund?”
asked Clive.

“They are Nevil Brooke’s words,” answered
Maskelyne, “which I set to music. But now
I will give you one of my own, my boys, and
away with melancholy thoughts!

“Comrades, fill your glasses!
Life is gay and pleasant
For the valiant spirits
Who have dared and done!
Every hour that passes
Bids enjoy the Present,
Which alone inherits
All that we have won!

“Soldier from the battle!
Sailor from the ocean!
None will here find favour
That would fret and pine;
For the cannon’s rattle
And the billow’s motion
Add but to the flavour
Of the flowing wine!

"All in chorus mingle,
 While we toast our brothers!
 May good luck bestead them!
 May they live and thrive!
 But if we must single
 One name from the others—
 Here's to him who led them!
 Here's to Robert Clive!

CHORUS.

Here's to him who led them!
 Here's to Robert Clive!"

When the cheering which followed this effusion had died away, Clive rose to his feet. The cloud was once more lifted from his face, and he looked around with the same quiet smile that his soldiers had so often seen in the midst of difficulty and danger.

"I am no speaker," he said. "It is not in my way. But I must thank you all for your good wishes, and for the value you are pleased to set on my services. Whatever credit may be due is as much yours as mine. We have worked and fought together, and my whole art consisted in the firm belief, that where one Englishman will lead other Englishmen will follow. But I hope I may differ from our friend Maskelyne in one respect. He seems to think we have worked

only for the present, and that the best thing we can do is to enjoy it while it lasts. Now let us enjoy it by all means, but I trust also we have done something for the Future—and that years hence, when we are all silent—when we have long ceased to drink, and laugh, and be merry, and when even Maske-lyne can sing no more songs—Englishmen will remember not unkindly the little band of East India Company's clerks, who left their desks and ledgers to uphold the honour of their flag, and in the worst of times never despaired of their country."

He spoke with a rough vigour, which was more effective than studied eloquence, and when he sat down amid a low murmur not less expressive than a storm of cheers, every cheek was flushed with enthusiasm, and every eye sparkled with honest pride. They felt an elation, which was quite excusable under the circumstances, and their admiration for their young leader was mixed with the consciousness of having done their duty. But they soon returned to the social pleasures of the hour, and the rest of the evening was spent in mirth and hilarity.

And now came the day fixed for the wed-

ding, at which Mr. Saunders and most of the English in Madras were present. Edmund Maskelyne gave away his sister, and Nevil stood near Clive at the altar, as he had stood by him on the walls of Arcot. But little time was given for congratulations and rejoicings. Very soon after the marriage, the bride and bridegroom sailed for England, accompanied by the bride's brother; and Nevil remained alone upon the shore, watching the ship till it disappeared beneath the horizon, and probably more depressed than at any moment since he left home. Louise gone, his best friends departed, and with nothing but a long weary delay and much uncertainty in view, before he could hope to rejoin them—no wonder that he went back to his work with a heavy sigh, and felt some of that sickness of the heart, which is not unknown to the bravest of exiles in a foreign land.

CHAPTER IV.

CORRESPONDENCE.

It was in the month of February, 1753, that Clive, who was now twenty-seven years of age, departed from India after his first campaigns, and that Nevil, still in his twenty-fifth year, entered upon the duties of his new post at Fort St. George. It was fortunate for the latter that he had plenty of occupation, which gave him little time for brooding in solitude, and there was too much of the social element in his character to leave him long without some companionship. He gradually formed new and agreeable acquaintances, and amongst others that of a young member of the Council of his own age, who had early attained to distinction in the Company's service, and who arrived about this time from Calcutta to take his seat at the Board. This was Robert

Orme, the future historian, to whose accurate observation and fluent pen we are indebted for almost all our knowledge of those stirring days of Indian adventure and conquest, and whose great work is a mine of valuable treasure, which requires some labour in the digging, but will well reward the pains.

With this gentleman Nevil spent many pleasant hours, when not engaged in his official duties, or in his private studies and correspondence. He continued to apply his mind to the native languages, literature, and customs, Arabic and Persian as well as Dravidian or Hindoo, and became familiar with many facts that were then but imperfectly known to Europeans in general. And while by his acquirements and assiduity he commanded the confidence of his employers, he also gained considerable influence over the people of different races and religions with whom he was brought into contact. There was a charm about *Nevil Sahib's* good-nature which very few of them could resist, and his own immediate attendants were warmly and faithfully attached to him.

But in the midst of all his engagements he was ever looking anxiously for letters. The

communications with Pondicherry were still rare and uncertain, and he only heard from Louise at distant intervals. When she did write it was in a guarded tone, as there was always the chance of the letters falling into wrong hands. But there was quite enough in them to convince Nevil of her undiminished regard, and he gathered from them various pieces of information, however cautiously conveyed. It was clear that Dupleix still clung desperately to his ambitious schemes, though crippled in all his resources, and daily losing his hold on the support of his countrymen. Jan Begum, too, was never resting in her intrigues, and poor Louise evidently suffered some persecution at the hands of that lady, who wished to make use of the girl's attractions for purposes of her own, and sought to marry her to Kirjean that she might have her more completely at her disposal. Then the Chevalier's health seemed to be more and more declining, and the situation was altogether one of great trial to his daughter. Yet every line she wrote was full of a brave, true, and hopeful spirit; and though Nevil felt very sad and solicitous on account of her troubles, he never doubted for

a moment the strength and constancy of her affection.

And now, in due course, letters arrived from England, with accounts of Clive's reception there, and of other matters of interest to Nevil.

"Everybody is talking of your friend Clive," wrote Mrs. Brooke, "and his brave actions are the theme of universal admiration. I hear that the King has shown him peculiar favour, and the Court of Directors have voted him a sword set with diamonds; and what does him great credit, he has refused to receive this gift unless a similar compliment is paid to his commanding officer, Major Lawrence. But my thoughts are all full of my dear boy, and I cannot tell you how much I value your kind letters and presents. I am almost afraid to trust in our good fortune, but I now really begin to hope that I may live to see you return to England a prosperous man. If a mother's prayers can avail anything, the same Divine Power that has hitherto protected you through so many perils will bring you safe home. Yet there is one thing that gives me uneasiness. This young girl, of whom you write so warmly, is

she not a bigoted Papist, and might she not lead you astray from the religion of your fathers? If you were to abandon the pure Gospel faith, no worldly advantages could make up for the grief it would cause me, and what is the human love that can be put in comparison with the soul's eternal welfare?"

Monsieur de la Rochelle wrote on the same subject, though in a somewhat different strain. "I need not assure you, my dear Nevil," he said, "how much pleasure I should take in any event which brought you into closer relations with my dear old friend the Chevalier. But I have made too many sacrifices in life for what I believe to be the truth, not to know and feel that there are some things which a man of honour cannot do even for those he loves; and I have my fears that your continuance in the Protestant faith would prove an insuperable bar to your union with the young lady of whom you draw so delightful a picture."

Nevil read these warnings with some impatience, and answered when he next wrote: "I am not afraid of any damage to my soul's health, from my love for one of the purest of God's creatures; and though some

dread of prejudices on the other side may have crossed my mind, the Chevalier is the model of a perfect gentleman, and would not have encouraged me thus far if he meant to offer me terms that he knew I could not accept in honour. Rest assured, my dear friend, that I have not forgotten your old device of *noblesse oblige*."

"I have some news that will please you," wrote his mother in her next letter. "Colonel and Mrs. Clive—he is a Colonel now in the King's service, and I hear that they call him General Clive at the India House—have been to pay us a visit. They travel in grand style, with rich liveries and four horses to their carriage, but no people could be kinder and more friendly, and you may judge how proud I was of the way in which they spoke of my dear boy. I only hope the colonel will not spend his hard-earned money too fast, as I hear he is living spendidly, and about to stand a contested election for parliament. Molly says he is the finest gentleman she has seen since your poor father, and he quite took to the old woman, and taught her how to dress rice for curry in the Indian fashion. Madame de la Rochelle looks charm-

ing in the beautiful dresses you have sent her, though she has the impertinence to say that they are wasted on Warwickshire, and are only fit to be exhibited at Versailles. But in spite of this affront, she is always my best and dearest friend and your second mother, and many a summer morning, and many a winter evening, you may picture to yourself two fond, foolish women sitting together, and talking over the absent boy who is the joy of their hearts. But I suppose there is another and younger face that now comes oftener to your mind—and it is right and in the nature of things that it should be so—only, do not let it lead you from the path of duty, or make you renounce the old ties of home, and country, and religion.”

“Is my mother getting jealous of my poor Louise?” said Nevil, with a faint smile. “Alas! there is but small chance of my seeing her for a long time to come, and any other prospect lies far away in the future. They need not trouble themselves in England about my perils on that score. I only wish I were in more imminent danger!”

Amongst other letters, Nevil received some long ones from his cousins in London, with

all the news of the family in Threadneedle Street. The first was from Kitty, full of raptures over the Indian presents.

“It was so very, very kind of you to think of us, my dear cousin, and the shawls are the most elegant, darling loves of things that ever were seen. Mamma would write herself to thank you, but you know that a letter is always a trouble to her, so she makes use of my pen to tell you how highly she prizes your gifts. We have worn them at all sorts of places, and everybody admires them hugely. Then, too, we have seen Colonel Clive, your Indian hero. His father has taken a large house in Swithin’s Lane, near the Post-office, and the other day we met the colonel at the Lord Mayor’s. He was dressed in scarlet and gold, with a powdered wig, very showy and fashionable—but I cannot honestly say that I think him handsome. However, handsome is that handsome does, you know, and I hear that he has behaved very generously to all his friends and relations. We often talk of you, dear cousin, and of the merry days we had together, in the old, old times, ever so long ago, before you went to India, and when we were all

young. For you must know that both Patty and I are getting monstrous old, and that many things are not so pleasant as formerly. Mamma is as kind as can be, and poor dear grandpa is very good to us, but papa has grown crosser than ever, and will not let us go about or do anything we like. I think he would keep us shut up altogether, only that mamma tells him he is not a Turk, and that we are not to be treated like African slaves. The fact is he wanted to marry us to two hideous old lords, who had their names on his books for money lent, but we soon put a stop to that business, and led the two old gentlemen such a life that they were glad to hobble back to Westminster. Since then, papa fancies there must be some one else in the way, and has taken a spite against a friend of ours—Captain O'Connor, an Irish gentleman, whom I dare say you remember—and has forbidden him the house, and used him worse than a savage. But the captain is not only a fine, handsome man, but superior *in every way* to those ugly old lords; for he is descended from the kings of Connaught, and has a palace in Ireland as big as Windsor Castle, only that it has all gone to ruins, and tumbled

down. He was particularly pleased with our new shawls, and says that we look like angels in them, for we still manage to meet sometimes, you see, and papa cannot prevent our going to church. If you write to me or Patty, don't say anything about what I have just told you, unless you send your letter under cover to Tom Jackson—you remember Tom Jackson, papa's clerk—for then it will be quite safe. And now, my dear cousin, accept once more the best thanks of us all for your charming presents, and for your kind remembrance of us."

Some time after, Nevil received the following epistle from Patty.

"Oh, my dear cousin! all sorts of events have happened since Kitty wrote to you last. I am in such a flutter that I scarcely know how to begin. I don't know whether she told you, but I dare say you guessed, that poor dear Kitty has long been *faithfully attached* to a gallant Irish officer named Patrick O'Connor, who used to meet us at Ranelagh and Vauxhall. Papa suspected it, and took a great dislike to him, and called him a beggarly Irish adventurer, and behaved *most cruelly* to Kitty. Even grandpa said it

would never do, and mamma was talked over to set her face against it; but of course I was not going to desert my only sister. When Kitty was watched and spied upon *in the most unhandsome manner*, I took care that she should have the captain's letters all the same through a friend of mine. And they used to meet in secret, but one day it was all found out, and then came such an explosion as never was. Papa stormed and threatened, and the captain drew his sword and swore they should have his blood before he would part with his Kitty, and she (poor girl!) went into hysterics, and mamma would have fainted away only that there happened to be a bottle of strongwaters near at hand, and I could do nothing but cry and cut their stay-laces. When the scene was over, the captain went off in high dudgeon, and papa vowed that Kitty should never see him again; but she was not to be frightened out of her fancy, and said she was of full age and able to judge for herself, and that she would have him in spite of them all. Then papa turned as white as a sheet—he has never much colour, you know, at the best of times—and declared she should never touch a penny of his money;

and though I got away to grandpa, and begged and prayed him on my knees not to abandon our Kitty, the old gentleman only pushed up his wig, and said that he could not sanction filial disobedience. We had a most miserable fortnight, but Kitty stood firm and resolved to marry the captain at all hazards. A short time ago, we could have settled it quietly enough, just by slipping out and going to the Fleet for a parson; but that horrid Lord Hardwicke and his new marriage act have made it more difficult for poor girls, so that the banns had to be put up before they could be married. However, we managed it all at last, and when everything was ready, Kitty and I went alone to the church—not in your Indian shawls, my dear cousin, but in plain hoods and mantles—and there we met the captain and another friend of mine, and Patrick O'Connor and Kitty Brooke were joined together in holy matrimony. When my father heard of it, he turned us both out of doors, and forbade dear mamma to see or speak to us, and I do not know what we should have done—for Captain O'Connor does not appear to have any home of his own in London, except a

room at a tavern in Whitefriars, and his estates in Ireland are somehow mortgaged or something of that sort—if old Mr. Crabtree had not taken us into his little house at Islington, where we are now living in quite a rural solitude. Papa will not hear our names mentioned, but mamma sends us private messages by Tom Jackson, who is afraid he will lose his place for the part he has taken in this affair. It is all very dreadful at present, but I dare say it will come right in the end; and at all events I am glad that our Kitty has not married that ugly old lord, and has taken the man of her choice in spite of everything and everybody.”

The next letter from Patty ran as follows :

“I told you that we were stopping at old Mr. Crabtree’s, and you cannot think how kind he has been to us, though he does give a growl now and then. But when papa found out where we were, and that Tom Jackson had been all along in our secrets, he grew more furious than ever, and dismissed both him and Mr. Crabtree from his service. The latter only grinned when he told us of it, and the fact is, he has saved a good bit of money, and he and Tom are going into

business together, and think they shall do very well. And now, my dear cousin, I have another piece of news for you. I always liked Tom, and I believe he admired me vastly, but of course I used to turn up my nose at him when I fancied myself a great lady; but since these troubles have come upon us, and the faithful fellow has been so devoted to Kitty and me, I have somehow changed my mind, and resolved to reward him for his constancy; and to make a long story short, we were married last week at Islington church."

"My poor uncle!" said Nevil, when he read this letter. "So there is the end of all his ambitious schemes. The two daughters that were to bring titles and honours to his house! The one married to a needy adventurer, and the other to his own clerk. And my dear, foolish, wilful cousins! I hope they may not have to repent of their rashness. The Captain O'Connor I knew was much too fond of his dice and his bottle, and Tom Jackson was not quite the unselfish fellow that poor Patty thinks him. I must write to my mother, and see if she can give the run-aways any advice or assistance. I do not

suppose my aunt or the alderman will hold out long, but my uncle will never forgive them. He showed me no great kindness, but I cannot help feeling sorry for him."

Nevil was right in his conjecture, that Mrs. Humphrey Brooke would not long play the part of a stern parent to the fugitives, and that Alderman Sterling was not likely to desert his grandchildren.

"We have had our troubles, dear cousin," wrote Patty in her next letter, "though we are married according to our inclinations, and have no reason to complain of our husbands. But we almost thought that our family had quite cast us off, and were getting frightened that we should never see dear mamma any more, when one day we had a message, that we were to take a walk in Moorfields a little after dusk in the evening. And there, sure enough, we met mamma, with no one but John the porter to attend her, and she took us to the house of our old nurse at Hoxton. At first, she was very angry, and said we both deserved to be whipped. But when we had had a good cry, and promised never to be naughty again—just as we used to do when we were children—mamma began to

cry too, and kissed us, and forgave us there and then. She told us, that she had been forced to come and see us privately, for that she and papa had had a violent quarrel on our account, which nearly led to a separation, and would have done so if grandpa had not interfered, and threatened *to make another will*. So the quarrel was patched up somehow, but still papa would not hear our names mentioned, and for some time we could only see mamma by stealth. But by degrees grandpa was won over to our side, and now he makes us an allowance, which was very welcome to us and our husbands, and we live in two snug little houses in the pretty village of Hackney, and mamma comes to visit us when she likes, in her own coach, as papa finds it is of no use opposing her. But heigh-ho! I am afraid our best days are over, and that we shall never see such merry times again, as when you were with us in London, dear cousin, and we did nothing but laugh from morning to night. Do you remember what tricks we used to play you, when you first came to our house, and how we dressed you up for the masquerade, and how we saw Orator Henley fall off his tub,

and how we nearly lost Kitty in the crowd at Bartholomew Fair? And then do you remember the water-parties on the Thames, and the drives to Belsize, and the balls at Ranelagh, and the suppers at Vauxhall, and the plays and the operas, and what disputes we had over actors and actresses, and dancers and singers, and how you always stood up for Mr. Garrick against all our handsome favourites? Well, well! we shall never see such days and nights again, and by the time you come back from India we shall be old married women, and I suppose you will be as yellow as a guinea, and wear a wig. And do you know, my dear cousin, I sometimes think we have not behaved quite well to papa, and Kitty thinks so too, and it makes us a little uneasy in our minds? But Tom says it is all nonsense, because he was never much of a father to us—that is, he never gave himself much trouble about us—but then he was our father all the same, you know, and was not unkind to us in general, and let mamma spoil us in most things. Kitty says, it puts her in mind of King Lear that we saw at Drury Lane. But I am sure we are not a bit like those two

wicked sisters, who turned their poor old father out into the rain, and we never poisoned anybody, or did anything of that kind. Still, I am afraid we are not such good daughters as we ought to be, and it always makes my ears tingle, when the fifth commandment is read out in church. What do you think about it, dear cousin?"

This was a difficult letter to answer, but Nevil did it in the kind and considerate tone that was natural to him. He said what he could for his uncle, and strongly advised his cousins to try every means to be reconciled to him, and to obtain his forgiveness. He did not pretend to approve of their late proceedings, but he showed clearly that his affection for them and his interest in their affairs were in no degree abated, and he assured them that he had never thought for a moment of comparing them to Goneril and Regan!

While this correspondence was going on with England, Nevil's attention was much occupied with public events in India. The contest continued between Dupleix and Lawrence, and the former, never despairing of ultimate success, still relied on assistance

from Bussy (whose influence was paramount at the court of Salabut Jung) to retrieve his fortunes in the Carnatic. He consented indeed to a conference with the English, and made overtures as if about to treat, but the terms he asked were inadmissible, and he pursued his intrigues and projects with undiminished ardour. It was now that this extraordinary man, embarrassed by the impoverished state of the French Company's treasury, devoted nearly the whole of his private fortune to the public service, and borrowed large sums on his own credit to defray the expenses of the war. Even if he stood alone, he was resolved to maintain the struggle for supremacy, and to exhaust all his resources before he would abandon the cherished objects of his ambition.

But, in the mean while, important transactions were taking place in Europe. The French and English governments, still ostensibly at peace, were growing weary of these Indian wars between the Companies, that must sooner or later involve the two nations everywhere. Lord Holderness, then secretary of state, remonstrated vigorously with the French ministry on the subject, and

prevailed on King George to order a fleet to be equipped for the East Indies. Negotiations followed, in which the Duke of Newcastle and the Duc de Mirepoix took part, and after some delay it was finally agreed, that commissioners should be appointed to settle the questions in dispute. Mr. Saunders, the Governor of Madras, was named on the part of England; but the French had sufficient sagacity to see that no arrangement would be possible, so long as Dupleix remained in the ascendant. It was therefore determined to supersede him, and Monsieur Godeheu, a Director of the French Company, was sent out with full powers to take the matter into his own hands.

It was a letter from Louise, that first informed Nevil of what had happened.

“I send this, dear friend, by the messenger who is to announce the arrival of our new Governor, and I hope we shall now be able to write more freely, and that peace will soon be restored between your compatriots and mine. Yesterday, when we least expected it, a French frigate anchored in our roads, bringing out Monsieur Godeheu, who is to succeed Monsieur Dupleix as commander of

all our settlements. You may judge what a commotion it made in the colony. All the friends of Monsieur Dupleix were in despair, and all his enemies delighted ; but he, whatever he may have felt, retained his dignity and composure, and I cannot help admiring him more in his fall than ever I did in his grandeur. He went out in his fine Moorish dress, with all his music and pomp, to meet the new Governor, saluted him courteously, and resigned his office without a murmur. It is said indeed, that Monsieur Godeheu had a letter from the King in his pocket, which would have enabled him to arrest Monsieur Dupleix, and send him to France as a prisoner. But I do not consider this should make us think less of the magnanimity of Monsieur Dupleix. Even my dear father who never loved him, and who, alas ! is too ill to take any part in public affairs, can sympathize with him in this terrible disappointment of all his hopes. Jan Begum does not bear it so well, and makes no attempt to conceal her rage and mortification. But though this incident has occupied us all for the moment, my mind is full of far other thoughts. My father grows weaker every

day, he takes scarcely any nourishment, and though he has always a sweet smile and a tender word for me, I can see in his dear face—oh! I cannot tell you all my fears. How I long to have you near me, dear Nevil! to speak to you, to consult you, to fly to you for support and consolation! But I know that it cannot be; and I can only pray for him, and you, and myself, that we may have strength to bear the trials which are perhaps in store for us, and to hold fast by the faith that our affection will survive them all.”

To this Nevil was able to reply, that he hoped to come to her almost immediately. He was to be the bearer of letters from Saunders to Godeheu, proposing a suspension of arms, and containing the rough draft of the preliminaries of a treaty. He waited impatiently for the time to set out, and promised himself unmixed pleasure from the meeting with his friends at Pondicherry. But just as he was about to start on his journey, the following note was brought him by a special messenger.

“You must come at once, dear Nevil, if you wish to see my poor father again. I scarcely know what I write, and you may

not be able to read it—my hand shakes so, and my eyes are so blinded with tears—but he has asked for you, and given you his blessing. It will soon be all over !”

When Nevil had read these lines, he did not lose another moment in taking his departure, and travelled with the utmost possible expedition, urged on by mingled feelings of love and fear. On approaching the well-known boundary hedge, his heart beat with a vehement emotion that almost choked his utterance, as he asked the first French soldier to whom he exhibited his passport, whether he knew anything of the condition of the Chevalier de Ste. Croix.

“Alas, monsieur !” said the man, drawing his hand across his eyes ; “if you are a friend of his, I am sorry to have to tell you bad news. The Chevalier died yesterday, and he has not left a braver or better behind in all the colony. You see, monsieur, I have some right to speak, because I served under him at Covrepauk, and know the worth of my old commander.”

Nevil did not wait to hear more, but dashed forward at full gallop towards the

town, intent only on reaching Louise to comfort her in her loneliness, and help her to bear the great affliction that had fallen upon her.

END OF VOL. II.

